

Explaining mind training firstly from the *Eight Verses of Mind Training*:

The subject matter is called <i>Mind Training</i> called <i>Wheel-Weapon/ Wheel-of-Sharp-Weapon</i> . Perhaps the <i>Eight Verses of Mind Training</i> can be explained first. The Tibetan word <i>Lojong</i> literally means <i>To train the mind</i> .
Explaining the mind training teachings genre is easy. Understanding these teachings also comes about quite easily. It is not difficult to explain and understand. But it is very different to practice.
Mind training in general can be [explained in terms of] the mind training of the person of small capacity, the mind training of the person of medium capacity and the mind training of a person of great capacity.
When the phrase <i>Lojong</i> , mind training/ thought transformation is used, such a genre of teachings refers primarily to the training of a person of great capacity.
This text on the <i>Eight Verses of Mind Training</i> deals with mind training of a person of great capacity.
Perhaps many are familiar with the origins of these teachings on mind training on bodhicitta. There is a lineage of Mahayana mind training passing from <i>Manjushri</i> to <i>Nagarjuna</i> and <i>Shantideva</i> . This system of cultivating bodhicitta is called an instruction of <i>Exchanging Self and Other</i> .
There is another system of generating bodhicitta that came from <i>Maitreya</i> , and was passed down to <i>Asanga</i> and so forth. This system of cultivating bodhicitta is called the <i>Seven Fold Cause and Effect Instruction</i> .
These two instructions for cultivating bodhicitta were handed down in their respective lineages. Perhaps it was during the time of <i>Lama Serlingpa</i> that, these two lineages were combined.
As many are aware, <i>Lama Atisha</i> traveled for thirteen months in a ship [from India] coming down to current day Sumatra to receive these instructions for cultivating bodhicitta from <i>Lama Serlingpa</i> .

The purpose and motivation of listening to the teachings and the pitfalls to avoid:

If one were to examine the life story of Lama Atisha, one will see that he spent thirteen months traveling in a boat in those days, putting up with dangers to his life and so forth, just to receive these instructions for cultivating bodhicitta.
Such examples show how much hardships [the great masters of the past] were willing to endure just to receive the teachings.
If one examines these life stories of the great masters of the past, then comparatively speaking, whatever inconveniences or discomfort or 'hardships' that one may experience in learning and practicing the Dharma, pales in comparison.
This shows that, if one does not want something, does not have the strong yearning for something, one will never achieve it.
Without such yearning, devotion and faith, it is impossible to develop any experiences and realizations of the Dharma.
Looking at one's situation nowadays, the Dharma is readily available, one can listen to the Dharma anytime anywhere. There are so many materials available to consult and read. Khenrinpoche: So, no need to [travel] thirteen months by [boat]...
It happens to all of us that, a while after listening to the teachings, say the practices of a person of small capacity, one may have the attitude thinking and saying that: "Oh, this is something that I've heard before..."
Or when learning about the Mahayana teachings like thought transformation/ mind training, one thinks and also says: "Oh, this is [also] something that I have heard before."
When one has such [perspectives], what one is basically thinking and saying, is that such teachings are of <i>no benefit</i> to one's mind. One way or another, this is what one means.
Khenrinpoche: Another way of saying is: " <i>It is boring!</i> " Perhaps that's the right word.
Conversely, when one reads or studies a more challenging and difficult text, because it is difficult, one thinks: "Oh, this is something that <i>does not benefit</i> my practice, this is something that I don't need. It is too complicated!"
Hence again, another kind of complication arises in one's mind. One essentially goes on to pile up one's mind with all such complications: "Oh, this teaching is not working out for me, that is of no benefit, this is of no need."
One then ends up with piles of complications, thinking: " <i>None of [the Buddha's teachings] are effective for my mind!</i> "
The mind training teachings actually exposes all of one's faults. It is essentially [exposing] the faults one has, one by one. It is like a doctor telling one all the sicknesses that one has.
<i>The whole point of such an exercise is to essentially [persuade one] to see the need to change oneself.</i>
As for the purpose of listening to the teachings, it is stated very clearly in the beginning of the <i>Stages of the Path to Enlightenment</i> literature that, this is to correct and rectify one's own faults, on the basis of recognizing them.

The purpose of listening to and studying these mind training teachings is therefore to do just that: <i>To recognize one's own faults, and then to rectify them. It is not to help one identify the faults in others.</i>
It is therefore important right from the beginning [of learning this text], to not get the purpose and the motivation wrong.
It is said in the teachings that, if one's exercise in learning and listening to the Dharma leads one into identifying and digging out the faults of others, then one is really mistaken.
If one studies the Dharma in order to identify and pick out the faults in others, then mind training becomes impossible.
Therefore, it is very much emphasized in the teachings that, from the very beginning [of listening to any Dharma discourse], one must not get one's purpose and motivation wrong.
Whenever one is in such a situation of listening to and learning the teachings, one should remind oneself that, the purpose is to identify one's own faults and rectify them.
Before one starts each teaching session, one always recite the verse of going for refuge to the Three Jewels and then generating the mind of enlightenment.
The purpose of reciting that verse is to actually think about its meaning and to generate the thought: "I am going to receive and listen to these teachings for the purpose of achieving enlightenment for the benefits of all sentient beings."
Generating the mind of enlightenment essentially means, to develop the yearning to achieve full enlightenment for the benefit of others. That is what the mind of enlightenment is. If one yearns for enlightenment merely for one's own purpose, then this does not become the mind of enlightenment/ bodhicitta.
Many of us have already received the bodhisattva vow, some even have the tantric vow. The essence of the bodhisattva vow is essentially taking the oath to work for others only, to achieve enlightenment solely for that purpose.
Although one takes such vows, but in reality, this literally becomes a mere promise. There is nothing more than mere words.
Even though there is supposed to be an attitude of bodhicitta, this of course is something that one does not have. After taking the vow, one is supposed to cultivate and increase bodhicitta, of which one also does not have.
Hence, the kind of promises that one makes, are essentially empty promises. We are all like that.

How to engage in real Dharma practice after taking the bodhisattva vow:

If one asks what practice comes after generating the mind of enlightenment and then taking the bodhisattva vow is, it is explained in a condensed way in the short text called the <i>The Eight Verses of Mind Training</i> .
The practice is essentially a combination of method and wisdom. The first seven verses deal with the method aspects of the path, the last verse deals with the training in wisdom.
If one were to ask: "What is the characteristic and hallmark of <i>real</i> Dharma practice?" Then it has to be this mind training. This is the real Dharma practice. This is because:
a) Merely taking initiations, reciting sadhanas and mantras would <i>not change</i> the mind. b) Taking the bodhisattva vow alone without having trained the mind in it does <i>not change</i> the mind. c) Just studying the Dharma [alone] does <i>not change</i> the mind.
It is very difficult for the mind to be changed by these [activities alone].
So how can one change one's mind for the better? There is only one way: <i>The way to transform the mind is to think [deeper] and change one's way of thinking.</i>
There is no other way out [other than] this. So one has to reflect and think [about this].
It is very clear, if one honestly looks at one's own life. Even those who have been 'exposed' to and being in contact with the Dharma for twenty, thirty years, actually, one has nothing to show for. There is no progress whatsoever. It does not matter how many mantras one has recited, how many prostrations one has done and so forth.
Since one has never ever 'settled' down to change one's mind, one's way of thinking, one has never practiced the meaning of the Dharma, the mind training, therefore, one finds oneself very much the same as one was when one first started.
There is no real transformation. Hence, the fault lies in not having practiced mind training. Not only has one not improved, but perhaps one may even have degenerated. Over time, one gets more afflictions [like] anger, disturbances and discursive thoughts in the mind. If one looks honestly, that may really be the case. This all comes back to not having really practiced.
When the teachings tell one of one's faults, one really has to look into one's own mind, recognize and acknowledge that.
[Developing trust, faith and respect for the teacher, an indispensable factor for success in spiritual progress:]
The way one learns the Dharma, one's attitude [in learning], also makes a difference: If one has trust, faith and respect for the speaker/ instructor, then one will take such teachings and instructions to heart.

One will then actually look [deep] into oneself and see that: “Oh yes, I have this and that faults.”

Otherwise, if one does not know how to listen, then at most, one may be physically present and hears that: “Yes, he is saying that I have this and that faults.” But that is all there is to it. One registers what is being said, but one would not look at oneself and acknowledge that one actually have those problems.

How the combined factors of yearning the Dharma and faith in the instructor ensure success:

That is why, right at the beginning of the *Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, the practice of correctly relying on the virtuous friend is taught.

If from the side of the listener, one has a strong yearning for the Dharma, then if one seeks out and listens to the Dharma from someone that one really can devote to, someone one feels one can trust, someone who affects one's mind in a very positive way, someone one really believes in,

***When these two conditions gather: one's yearning [for the Dharma], and faith in the [instructor],
Then even if one receives a very short teaching, that teaching will be very effective for the mind.***

If one receives instructions and teachings from someone one really has a lot of faith in, and combine that with one's own really strong interests and yearning in wanting to learn that [teaching], then even if one receives a very short teaching or instruction, it is very effective for the mind.

It is mentioned *Stages of the Path* that, one of the defining characteristic of a student, a suitable receptacle for the teaching, who relies on the teacher, is *being diligent*. This is someone who has a strong yearning for the Dharma.

When such conditions gather, from one's side, one has strong yearning, [combine that] with receiving teachings from someone whom one really feels faith, trust and devotion towards, the teaching would then become very effective.

When there is the gathering of these conditions, one will experience the taste of the teaching and see a positive change. One will really want the Dharma. When this happens, that is what one can call '*having received the blessings.*'

Whether one calls it receiving the blessings from a virtuous friend or receiving blessings from Buddha, whatever one calls it, that is what blessing is, as it is the *transformation of the mind*.

[How the Dharmakaya engages sentient beings:]

When one receives the blessings, having the mind transformed, this means that the Buddha's enlightened activities have engaged one. As is said in [*Sublime Continuum's*] verse 27: “Because the Buddha's body is pervasive.” This is the meaning.

The person whose mind has changed, is the person who has been engaged by the enlightened activities of the Buddha.

In the section on correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, where one meditates on one's own gurus as Buddha, that the guru *is* Buddha, one of the reasons shown is that, he is the agent of all the Buddha's [enlightened] activities.

It is only when one's mind changes positively through listening to the instructions of one's own virtuous friends and practicing those teachings that, the reason the virtuous friend *is* the agent of all the Buddha's activities [would make sense].

One must never lose the meaning of Dharma in whatever one does: whether one is listening to the Dharma, learning the Dharma, reciting *Om Mani Padme Hum*, making prostrations. Whatever these [activities] one may do, one must never ever forget the purpose, the essential meaning, behind all such activities.

***It is all for subduing and disciplining one's own mind.
This should be in the back of one's mind all the time.***

One may remember *Shantideva's Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, where he said very clearly that,

***If one engages in whatever activities, like prostrations, reciting mantras, prayers, listening to the Dharma and so forth,
If it is done with a distracted mind, then all such activities become meaningless, these will not fulfill the purpose.***

Why do all such activities become meaningless if it is done with a distracted mind? This is because,

If the mind has not changed for the better, then it is meaningless, the purpose has not been fulfilled.

But somehow, one's mind has always remained very stubborn and hard. One continues to hear and listen about such teachings, yet one's mind still does not change. It is very hard and 'solid'.

Verse 1 – Seeing the benefits of cherishing others and generating the determination to do so:

***Determined to obtain the greatest possible benefit from all sentient beings,
Who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel, I shall hold them most dear at all times.***

This verse is saying that: “From my own side, I view all sentient beings without exception, as more precious than the wish-fulfilling jewel.” This is to highlight the *need to generate the mind that cherishes others*.

<p>There are a few things here to think about: There are some commentaries which explain that, sentient beings are like wish-fulfilling jewels. If a wish-fulfilling jewel is stuck and covered with mud, then it would not be of any benefit to anyone.</p>
<p>Likewise, if one's view of sentient beings does not change, viewing them in the usual ordinary way, under such a situation, from the side of sentient beings, they will not be able to give one the happiness of future lives, liberation and enlightenment.</p>
<p>If one finds a wish-fulfilling jewel [in the mud], takes it out, cleans it thoroughly, anoints it with scented water, installs it on top of a victory banner on the fifteenth day of the lunar calendar and supplicates it, then it is said that, all of one's material wishes and needs will be granted.</p>
<p>Likewise, if one changes one's way of viewing sentient beings, firstly by recognizing that they are the basis/ objects in relation to whom one can practice generosity, ethical discipline, patience, joyous perseverance and the rest of the perfections, by focusing on them, if one practices these perfections, then these sentient beings can [confer on one] the happiness of this life, liberation and enlightenment. This is how one can understand that, sentient beings are similar to a wish-fulfilling jewel.</p>
<p>This verse is saying that, from one's own side, if one benefits and cherishes others, then they will become the source [/cause] of one's happiness. It is clear that, the happiness that one experiences in this life is dependent on others.</p>
<p>If one does not rely on others, there is no way that one can achieve any of the happiness and pleasures of this life. Likewise, one can never achieve the bliss of liberation without relying on others. Of course, then enlightenment is impossible if one does not rely on others.</p>
<p>The point is that, if one cherishes others, then the happiness of this life comes, the happiness of liberation can be achieved, likewise, the happiness of full enlightenment will also occur. If one does not cherish them, none of these will happen.</p>
<p>Not only are sentient beings similar to a wish-fulfilling jewel, this verse is saying that, sentient beings are <i>even more</i> precious than it. As mentioned, if one does find a wish-fulfilling jewel, supplicates and prays to it, it will grant all material wishes.</p>
<p>But, unlike sentient beings, the wish-fulfilling jewel can never grant one the happiness of future lives, liberation and full enlightenment. Through the examples mentioned, if from one's own side, one trains to cherish sentient beings, then in dependence on them, one can achieve the happiness of future lives, liberation and full enlightenment.</p>
<p>Hence, sentient beings are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel.</p>
<p>The verse is saying that, with the determination to achieve the highest goals, the happiness of future lives, liberation and enlightenment will all [be attained] if from one's own side, one changes one's perspective of sentient beings and cherishes them. One will achieve all these goals.</p>
<p>Since that is the case, the conclusion will be that, <i>I shall hold them most dear at all times.</i></p>
<p>In the normal way that these verses are phrased [in the original root text], they always end with <i>May I be able to do this or that</i>. In this case, <i>May I hold them most dear at all times</i>.</p>
<p>There are some versions where, the last line is [amended to] phrase as <i>I shall, I will hold them most dear at all times</i>.</p>
<p>This is more powerful. This is because, in the original version, the phrase is merely making a wish/ prayer. But if this is changed to <i>I will hold them most dear at all times</i>, this becomes more forceful in that, one is making a commitment.</p>
<p>One is telling oneself this is what one must do. Instead of the usual way of saying <i>May I hold them most dear at all times</i>, in Tibetan <i>dzin par shog</i>, if it is changed to <i>dzin par lub, I will cherish them most dear at all times</i>, then it becomes a pledge.</p>
<p>Of course, for it to really become an effective oath, one must first know what one is doing, why one is doing it. One must see the benefits of changing one's [perspective] of others and cherish them.</p>
<p>As the verse says, because one is <i>determined to achieve the highest aim</i>. If one sees the benefits/ advantages of cherishing others, then one would [voluntarily] take on that pledge/ oath.</p>
<p>In <i>Engaging the bodhisattva deeds</i>, Shantideva said:</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>6.113 A buddha's qualities are accomplished From sentient beings and the Victors alike, So what kind of system is it that I do not respect sentient beings in the same way I respect the Victors?</i></p>
<p>To achieve enlightenment, one has no choice but to rely on Buddha. Without relying on Buddha, there is no way to achieve enlightenment. Likewise, to achieve enlightenment, one also has to depend on sentient beings as well, without whom, there is also no enlightenment. Hence, sentient beings are equal in weight as a cause of one's enlightenment.</p>
<p>This is another [strong] reason to [conclude that], from one's own side, one has to change one's way of thinking and cherish sentient beings if, enlightenment is what one wants. This is what one has to do.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>There is no way to achieve the state of full enlightenment without cherishing sentient beings.</i></p>

The whole purpose of generating the mind of enlightenment and then taking on the bodhisattva vow essentially means that, one is taking on the oath and making the pledge to achieve enlightenment for the purpose of benefiting others.
Hence, if from one's own side, one does not cherish sentient beings, then how is it possible to achieve enlightenment?
Therefore, the very first step in mind training in moving [the mind] towards bodhicitta is to cultivate this very big mind. This comes from understanding all the different reasons, purposes and benefits and so forth.
Therefore, one initially needs such a big [mindset] that encompasses all sentient beings, a [mindset] that wishes to care for and cherishes sentient beings. One firstly needs to cultivate a very big [all-embracing] mind.

Verse 2 – Cultivating humility as a starting point to cherish others:

After this, on a practical level, what does one do next? Even if one does [manage] to cultivate such a big mind, but it is just at the level of wish/ attitude. Even if one possesses such an attitude, at this [juncture], there is still no way one can be of benefit to all sentient beings. One will not be in any position to be of real benefit to all sentient beings.
Even though one starts off with this big attitude, but on a practical level, how does one translate that into practice at one's level when one conducts oneself [with respect to others]? This is shown in verse 2:
<i>When in the company of others, I shall always consider myself the lowest of all, And from the depths of my heart hold others dear and supreme.</i>
On a practical level, when one applies such [a big] attitude in [everyday] life, it says here that, one should always consider and hold oneself as the lowest of all. <i>This is an antidote to pride.</i>
<i>Having a very strong pride creates a lot of problems and disturbances for oneself.</i>
<i>When in the company of others:</i> This means that, when one interacts with others, one should always consider oneself the lowest of all. This is because, in one's interaction with others, one [usually] considers oneself either as superior than the other person, or one thinks that one is on equal [footing], as peers with others.
<i>These two attitudes bring about a lot of complications in one's interactions in relationship with others.</i>
This is quite evident from one's experiences in life. In one's interaction with others, when there are problems in relationship with others, when there are disharmony, when relationships do not go well, these come because of these [two] attitudes.
One either holds oneself as superior with the attitude <i>I am better, I know better, or we are equals</i> . But If one takes a lower position, from one's own side, one sees oneself as lower, then it makes one's interaction with others much easier.
For example, if one really considers oneself as lower, then if the other person says something bad about one, looks down on one, thinking that one is lower, but if one has accepted from the beginning that oneself was already lower, then one's mind does not become disturbed [by being slighted and so forth]. This is quite clear.
The implication expressed in this verse is very clear. This is not something that is hidden or obscured. All of us experienced this, that one's ego and pride cause problems in one's interaction and relationship with others.
This verse is telling one where one's problem lies. It is saying that, it is one's ego and pride. So, one must identify and recognize that. One then must do something about it.
<i>There is no other way to deal with pride, other than to see oneself as lower than others.</i>
It says <i>I shall always consider myself the lowest of all and from the depths of my heart hold others dear and supreme.</i>
<i>From the depths of my heart</i> means that, [one should] not merely pay lip service [with empty talk] by saying: “Oh, you are wonderful, you are so precious and nice.”
<i>One should not [be insincere], but from the depths of one's heart [free from other motives], one should have such thoughts.</i>
<i>Hence, one has to lower oneself to the lowest of all and simultaneously feel sincerely that others are supreme and higher.</i>
Perhaps, naturally one will wonder: “How is it possible that I am actually the lowest of all? I maybe lower than some, but how is it possible that I am the lowest of all. This is because, I am definitely richer than some, more handsome or pretty than some, I am more intelligent than some and so forth.” Maybe we would not think that: “He is fatter than me!”

The reason why one should cherish all sentient beings:

The first verse of the *Eight Verses of Thought Transformation* seeks to widen one's perspective to encompass and take into account the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings. This is to [engender] one to develop from the onset such a very courageous thought having the wish to cherish all sentient beings.

This verse is therefore seeking to [persuade] one to develop this very big, courageous mind that wishes to cherish every sentient being. Of course, this can only arise on the basis of [knowing the reasons] why one has to do this.

There must be reasons, one must be able to justify to oneself for developing such a huge perspective. The reason is stated in the first verse itself, which is *The determination to achieve the highest aim*.

When one sees that one can achieve the highest aim through cherishing all sentient beings, one will then undertake the pledge/ oath to cherish all sentient beings. [This will happen only] when one has the thought: "I am going to develop this thought [to cherish others]."

Preliminary practices before actual meditation on the wish to cherish others:

It is said that ideally, for someone who wishes to put this into practice in the form of meditative reflections, the reflections of these verses should be preceded by:

1) Visualizing clearly the objects of refuge, one's *personal deity*, as *inseparable from one's own root guru*.

2) On the basis of this, one develops a *single-pointed faith and devotion in the guru-deity*.

3) On the basis of this, one performs the *seven branch worship*.

4) One then makes *wholehearted [request]*.

5) One visualizes a flow of nectar [coming] from the guru-deity, enters into one's crown and pervades one's entire being. This purifies and eliminates all the impediments and obstacles that prevent one from cherishing all sentient beings.

6) With such a visualization, one visualizes receiving blessings to be able to develop such a wish that cherishes all beings.

7) One recites the first verse slowly, while contemplating on the meaning:

Meditation on the reason why one should cherish all sentient beings:

The [first] verse says that, all sentient beings are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel. One must be convinced about this, seeing how that is the case.

[More precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel] means that, all of one's happiness of this life, future lives, liberation and full enlightenment are dependent on sentient beings in that, they are able to [bestow upon] one all of these levels of happiness.

Even though it is said that way, but one has to check for oneself to gain an ascertainment and conviction whether that is the case or not. This is because, it is only with a conviction, when one sees that, that is really true, would the thought naturally wishing to cherish them from one's own side arise.

If through one's own critical reflection, one sees for oneself that is indeed the case that, all of the different levels of one's happiness can all be bestowed on one by sentient beings, then one will naturally wish to cherish them from one's own side.

Through this, when one sees the purposes and benefits of cherishing others from one's own side, then a wholehearted commitment would arise. One can then make a wholehearted promise to oneself that: "I will cherish them most dear always."

Verse one is about generating such a big mind, which comes from seeing the benefits.

Verse 2 – How to cultivate humility as a starting point to cherish others:

***When in the company of others, I shall always consider myself the lowest of all,
And from the depths of my heart hold others dear and supreme.***

After having generated the big mind due to reflecting well on verse one, then how does one translate [such a mindset] into something practical in one's life? This is shown in this verse.

When in the company of others: In the interaction with others, whomever that person may be, be it one's own virtuous friend, one's own guru, or someone whom one considers as lower, like the destitute beggars and so forth, on all such interactions, from one's own side, one considers the other party as superior and oneself as lower.

From the depths of my heart hold others dear and supreme: Having the view of others as superior has to be sincere. One then views others in such a way with a respectful attitude.

It is evident in one's own experience that, in one's interaction with others, from one's own side, if one really thinks that one is lower than the other party, then there probably would not be any challenges or difficulties in one's relationship with him.

Antidotes to egoistic pride, the obstacle to seeing oneself the lowest of all:

Seeing one's own faults which do exist in reality:	
There are few things to consider: At such times when one finds oneself being egoistic and proud, then at that moment, it is important to focus on one's own faults, mistakes and shortcomings that one may have.	
For example, when one compares oneself to a dog, one always think that it is lower and worst off than oneself. The thought is there thinking: "I am a higher being and better in whatever way than this dog."	
Perhaps one can think about it this way: In <i>Lama Tsongkhapa's Praise of Dependent-Arising</i> , he said:	
<i>Being enslaved by ignorance Those who fiercely oppose you, What is so astonishing about their being Unable to bear the sound of no intrinsic existence?</i>	<i>But having accepted dependent origination, The precious treasure of your speech, Then not tolerating the roar of emptiness – This I find amazing indeed!</i>
There are people who criticize the Buddha out of ignorance. They cannot tolerate the explanation of the emptiness of inherent existence and profound dependent-arising as they do not understand these explanations due to their ignorance.	
Lama Tsongkhapa said that for such people, who do not have much faith in the Buddha, to voice their opposition on what He said about emptiness and dependent-arising, this is not really that surprising as this is expected.	
But what he found surprising was that, for those who admire, respect, believe and accept the Buddha's teachings, which also include His teachings on dependent-arising, yet cannot accept the [teachings on] emptiness of inherent existence, that he found very amazing. Why was he surprised?	
For those who do not have faith in the Buddhadharma, do not accept and practice the Dharma, when they make mistakes and commit negativities, this is nothing surprising and is to be expected.	
But when one considers oneself as Buddhists, saying: "I have faith in Buddha, His teachings and I practice the Mahayana teachings." One can say all of these but yet, one does not have much faith and practice to show for. This is really surprising.	
If one compares oneself to someone who is not a Buddhist, who does not have faith in the teachings and does not practice, in this sense, one is lower, lesser, worse off than these non-Buddhists.	
In the example of a dog mentioned earlier, it also does not practice the Dharma. This is expected, is normal and hardly surprising. But for one who accepts the Dharma, yet acts in complete opposite to what one stands for and believes in, this is really surprising. In this sense, one can establish and feel that indeed in many ways, one is lower than the dog.	
There are many things to consider: If one happens to be someone who has heard many teachings, studied a lot, knows the essential points of Dharma practice, yet, if one happens to be someone who has a questionable conduct that does not accord with the teachings, but is just committing nonvirtues and hardly creates any virtues, then this is really a waste and pity.	
In this sense, one is much less superior and much worse off than others.	
One can examine one's own life story and see if one happens to be like that. One says one has met the Dharma and has been practicing it for years, but one has nothing to show for in one's practice, no attainment and so forth. This is clear.	
Hence, one has no basis whatsoever to feel superior to others. There is no valid basis, reason and justification for that.	
This is a method to see how one is indeed less superior and lower than others. This is done through seeing all of one's own mistakes, faults and shortcomings.	
Seeing others' qualities, which are due to their virtues:	
To be able to respect the other person, one must see and acknowledge the person's qualities.	
For example, the other person maybe physically more attractive, has more wealth, good quality, having something good happening in the person's life that is not happening to oneself. Whatever good things these may be, one sees that the person has it and one does not. One sees that, this is the result of that person's own [virtuous] karma.	
If he is wealthier than oneself, then this is because he is experiencing the result of having practiced generosity in the past.	
This is the training that one can do, by focusing on the good qualities of others that are evident. When one does see it, one should arrive at the realization that, he has [such results] because of his own practice and good karma.	
In the case of not seeing any good qualities at all from one's own side, then at the very least, what one can think is this: "Although it is not evident, but that person should have some qualities that I am not [able to] see right now."	
Hence, these are all trainings of the mind.	

How it is not possible to know who one is actually interacting with:

<i>Chandrakirti</i> said in his <i>Middle Way</i> that, for someone who is actively engaged in the perfection of generosity, who is always wishing to enhance the practice of giving to different kinds of sentient beings, that it is really possible in the midst of such practices, that one of the recipients of his practice of giving could be a bodhisattva.
All it needs among the many recipients is just one bodhisattva. If it happens that the person does manage to give to a bodhisattva, then he would accumulate so much merit, due to having given to a bodhisattva.
Buddha did say that, it is very difficult to judge and say with certainty who a person really is. One cannot really tell whether the other person is ordinary or not. It is not possible.

Story of how one would not know who the other party is, and how Dromtonpa practices Exchanging Self and Other:

There are quite a few historical accounts of practitioners who kept low profiles. One such example was <i>Gyalwa Dromtonpa</i> , who was a disciple of <i>Lama Atisha</i> and a practitioner of the bodhicitta practice of <i>Exchanging Self and Others</i> .
Dromtonpa himself was in the aspect of a lay person and not an ordained person. He had many disciples, one of which was <i>Geshe Chenawa</i> . Once, Dromtonpa was invited to teach at a place where Chenawa was residing.
Usually in Tibet, when the Lamas move from one place to another, it does happen that they would travel in a huge procession, riding horses, having attendants, helpers and so forth.
But Dromtonpa, on his way to the teaching venue, was walking alone without any attendants, neither was he sitting on a horse. Along the way, he met a lay tantric practitioner. Because Geshe Chenawa's monastery was situated on a high ground, so to get there, people have to cross over a pass, a path that goes uphill.
The lay tantric practitioner must have been carrying many things, when Dromtonpa came up, the lay practitioner saw an ordinary unassuming, simple person who looked like he does not know anything, so he asked Dromtonpa to carry his things, a request which was readily accepted by Dromtonpa.
As they were walking after a while, the lay tantric practitioner decided to take out his boots, and told Dromtonpa to carry those as well. Again, Dromtonpa accepted the request happily and sincerely. He then carried the boots over his shoulders.
As they walked uphill and gradually nearing the monastery, the lay tantric practitioner saw a row of monks lining up on the pathway to the monastery, in a manner that shows that they were waiting for somebody.
The lay tantric practitioner wondered and asked Dromtonpa: "Do you know what is going on?" To which Dromtonpa replied: "I assume they are waiting for me!" The story goes that, the lay tantric practitioner was so ashamed that, he quickly gathered all his belongings back from Dromtonpa and fled.
Since Dromtonpa was someone who was always practicing the instruction of Exchanging Self and Other, he really view himself as lower than others. He was able to translate such knowledge into practice and actually [put theory into practice.]
Hence, he was really [glad] to carry whatever was asked of him by the lay person, whether it was his boots, luggage, etc.
Dromtonpa did not experience any difficulties because, since he had already considered himself as lower than his traveling companion, hence, when he was told to carry whatever things asked of him, he was readily agreeable to it.

The faults of pride and the advantages of humility:

One studies and learns the <i>Three Scriptural Collections, the Tripitaka</i> , for the purpose of reducing one's pride.
If one is able to consider oneself as lower, one benefits as one has less difficulties and one creates the conditions and basis from which one can gain good qualities.
It is very clear, if one examines one's own experience, what happens in life to oneself and others that, when one considers oneself as more important, when one prioritize oneself over others, or one thinks: "I am better than you," then there are bound to be challenging difficulties in relationship, it would not be harmonious.
This is a particular flavor of the teachings of the great Kadampa masters in that, they show [boldly and forcefully] one's problems exactly, listing and uncovering all of one's faults to show one that, these will be all the problems one will experience due to such faults.
It is quite obvious that, proud and egoistic people have a lot of problems in the present life in terms of their interaction with others. But the problems extend even beyond the present life.
This is because, the problems that one will experience due to pride will be worst in one's future lives in that, it will result as a rebirth in the lower realms. Even if one is born as a human, one will be born poor, in a low caste and others will despise one.

Verse 3 – Cultivating ethical discipline:

*Vigilant, the moment a delusion appears in my mind,
endangering myself and others, I shall confront and avert it without delay.*

One has to consider from many perspectives one's own shortcomings and faults. One also has to consider from many perspectives the positive qualities of others.

Even when one eventually manages to achieve this, one will still experience difficulties in one's practice. This is because, the afflictions like ignorance, anger and attachment will still arise very strongly.

Verse 3 is showing one what to do when the afflictions arise in one's mind. Even if one considers oneself lower than others, if the afflictions do not arise, then it is alright. But [while considering oneself as] lower than others, one's afflictions can still continue to arise, this verse addresses what to do about it.

Vigilant here means that, in all of one's conduct, one has to be vigilant to check one's mind continuously.

In general, there are four kinds of conduct: engaging in activities, moving about, being seated and lying down: The verse is saying that, whichever these four actions one may be engaging in, one has to rely on mindfulness and vigilance to see if one's afflictions are manifesting and whether one is also following them or not.

Conduct can also be explained in terms of the conduct of the body, speech and mind. Whatever is happening to one physically, verbally and mentally, one has to do the same thing and rely on mindfulness and vigilance to see whether one's afflictions like ignorance, anger, desire, jealousy, pride and so forth, are manifesting or not.

Whatever one may be doing, including listening to the Dharma, studying it, reciting mantras, doing one's daily prayers, in retreat, doing prostrations, circumambulations and so forth, the crucial point is to be mindful and vigilant, to see if one's afflictions are manifesting and whether one is following them.

If one relies on mindfulness and vigilance, when these [two mental factors] are present, one should be able to recognize the afflictions when they arise. When one recognizes it, one has to [subdue] them and not follow after them.

The verse is saying that, one should rely on mindfulness and vigilance to check for the arising of the afflictions. When one does discover that the afflictions are manifesting, the verse says *I shall confront and avert it without delay.*

How to confront and avert one's afflictions without delay:

One's problem is that, one does not even recognize the afflictions arising in the first place.

To be aware that the afflictions are arising in one's mind, one needs to be accustomed to mindfulness and vigilance. Without these [two mental factors], then when the afflictions do arise, one would not even know that they are arising and have arisen.

Taking desire as an example, one [usually] does not catch it when it arises, then after a while, it just [escalates and intensifies]. When desire becomes strong and gross, even if one may feel its presence and tries to apply antidotes to confront it, but [by this time], it is very difficult and challenging. **1)** It would be much easier to not let it arise in the first place.

Even if it does arise, **2)** if one is able to catch it right away from its onset due to the presence of one's mindfulness and vigilance, and deal with it there and then, then it will be much easier and less challenging.

If one is a practitioner and really wishes to practice, then one has to **3)** cultivate mindfulness and vigilance, applying them constantly, as the meaning of *vigilant* in the verse means: with all of one's conduct. One has to do this for the time being.

This is said to be extremely important. This is because, if one does not recognize the afflictions when they arise, does not confront nor avert it, instead, if one just follows after them and allow them to stay manifest, then the verse says that:

[I'll be] Endangering myself and others. Since the afflictions will harm oneself and others, therefore, [one should think:] “I will confront and avert it right away.”

Here, one is making a pledge to oneself thinking: “I **will** confront and avert the afflictions without delay. I **will** practice mindfulness and vigilance and I **will** apply the antidotes right away.”

Due to the lack of mindfulness and vigilance, one [would not be able to] see the arising of the afflictions. When the afflictions [initially] arise, they are relatively weaker in strength compared to when they are fully developed.

Hence, it is [more] difficult to [detect them] when they arise [initially], especially when one does not rely on mindfulness and vigilance, then it becomes really difficult to [notice them].

Since one does not [notice] their arising, when the afflictions [intensify and] manifest strongly, then as the predispositions of the afflictions will leave impressions on the mind, this is the time when a very strong impression will be left on one's mind.

One is leaving the potential to be afflicted in the same way again, for the anger or desire to arise strongly again in the future.

When one is unaware of the arising of the afflictions and does not apply the antidote immediately and allows them to [escalate and intensify], letting them become stronger, then the stronger the afflictions, the impressions that are left on one's mind will also be stronger. That is why these are called imprints or tendencies.

Faults of not doing anything to the afflictions and the benefits of confronting and averting them:
When a very strong impression of the afflictions is left on one's mind, what it does is that, one becomes very habituated to these afflictions such, that in the future, due to one's familiarity with desire, all it takes is to meet with a small desirable object and condition, one will [easily] generate strong desire.
Likewise, if one is habituated to anger, then all one needs is simply a small difficult or a tiny unpleasant situation, even though it may be relatively small, but due to being habituated to anger, one gets very upset immediately.
Instead of allowing oneself to follow after the afflictions and becoming very habituated with them, from the onset, if one sees the afflictions as faults and confronts it as much as possible, then the afflictions will not be so strong.
Hence, the impressions these afflictions will have on one's mind will also be much weaker, so much so, that in the future, even if one meets with objects of, say attachment, but due to not following after the afflictions, even if there were many objects of attachment near one, one will not become attached so easily.
If even the attachment does arise, it will be weak and not as strong as it could be. Since [one's] desire is not strong, then when one meets with the objects of attachment, it is said that, attachment may not even arise.
Identifying whether it is the external or internal enemy that is the most dangerous and harmful:
<i>Shantideva's Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds</i> emphasized that, one's afflictions are one's main enemy, and how important it is to [control] one's afflictions by being mindful and vigilant.
A lot was said about that text, like how [dangerous] the afflictions are, but in essence, they are said to be the main enemy.
One's concept of enemy is usually someone out [there] externally. But the teachings say that the external enemy is no where near as dangerous as one's own internal enemy which are the afflictions. This is because, at most an external enemy can only do is to harm one for the duration of one's life. But one's afflictions harm one in all of one's lifetimes.
The teachings also remind one what one already knows. For example, if one makes friends with the external enemy, he can be won over with gifts, communications and so forth. But the more one becomes harmonious with, gives in, acquiesce to and makes friends with the enemy that are one's afflictions, the more harm one gets in return.
It is said that, no matter how powerful one's external enemy may be, they are no where near as powerful as one's afflictions.
The teachings say that, no matter how powerful, deadly and how many external enemies one may have, even if every single person on this planet were to hate one and become one's enemies, even though they can harm one's possessions and oneself physically, the most they can do is to take one's life. There is nothing they can do beyond one's life.
There is nothing that they all can do in their power to throw one to the lowest of the hot hells, the relentless avici. But one's afflictions can harm one in all of one's lifetimes in the worst sufferings of the lower realms. They have the power to throw one into the worst of hells. Hence, one's afflictions are more deadly.
When the conditions are in one's favor, one can expel the external enemy to some far away place, or one can physically distance oneself from him. In spite of the best attempts, the external enemy can still return to harm one. But the internal enemy of one's afflictions can never return to disturb and harm one, if one relies on mindfulness and vigilance.
How one's afflictions harm one:
If one does not reflect and think about this, this would not be apparent, that one's afflictions are so deadly and harmful. One may [intellectually accept] that they are bad, but one may not realize how [deadly] they can be. One does not see this.
But if one does reflect and think deep, one will gradually come to see how powerful, harmful and deadly one's afflictions are.
Once one can see this, that one's afflictions really can endanger oneself, one will also infer and see that, everybody else is also endangered by their own afflictions. Hence, this is as it says in the verse, <i>endangering myself and others</i> .
In <i>Chandrakirti's Supplement to the Middle Way</i> , he said that even if a person who generally has a good physical demeanor and is pleasantly looking, will become unpleasant and ugly when that person is upset.
It is said in the teachings that, having unpleasant and unattractive physical appearance is the karmic result of anger.
When one is upset, one would probably not look good. Hence, when one is upset, one's physical demeanor is unlikely to cause any bliss to others and for them to feel happy looking at one.
Khenrinpoche: Maybe some people get so angry at his smile? I'm not sure...angry smile? Could be, but you can see that it's not a smile...
Someone who is usually regarded as a good person, that is usually well-spoken of [by others], if he were to suddenly get angry, then he would not be considered as a good person.
When one is upset, one would not be able to think straight. Usually, one may be able to differentiate right from wrong, is able to discriminate what is [virtuous] and what is not. One loses that ability to discern, one's sense of appropriateness, when one's anger manifests.

<p>One may be someone who is generally quite stable, wise and is able to [solve problems], but when one's afflictions become very strong and manifest, whether it is strong anger or strong desire, at these times, one loses all these qualities. One would not be able to think well and properly.</p>
<p>One really has to know very well the faults of one's afflictions, how one [actually] harms oneself by following one's afflictions, how one's afflictions cause harms to others and how the afflictions in general harm everyone.</p>
<p>How to work on one's afflictions after one knows the harms they can inflict:</p>
<p>When referring to samsara, circling in it from life to life, this occurs due to karma and afflictions. The primary cause are the afflictions, which cause one to suffer and circle from life to life. These are the source of all the problems and harms.</p>
<p>If one really can see and feel that, then naturally one will be mindful and vigilant all the time, guarding oneself as much as possible, against one's afflictions. To help one work with one's afflictions, a variety of methods were taught.</p>
<p>1) One can work with the afflictions through adopting the correct view, 2) One can work with one's afflictions through cultivation/ meditation, 3) One can also work with one's afflictions through modifying one's physical and verbal conduct.</p>
<p>In sum, verse 2 is an advice for one to consider oneself as lower than others, cherish and to hold them as superior. It is essentially an advice on how to work with one's ego and pride.</p>
<p>For verse 3, if one considers oneself to be a practitioner, then whatever one is doing at all times, even when doing daily prayers, recitations and so forth, one has to be mindful, vigilant and check one's mind regularly to see if the afflictions are arising or have arisen or not.</p>
<p>Whatever one is doing, even those so called daily prayers, one has to be honest and check to see, whether such activities are really harming/ hurting one's afflictions, becoming medicines and antidotes to one's afflictions or not.</p>
<p>This is extremely important and is emphasized very strongly in the teachings, one has to be really mindful and vigilant all the time to guard one's mind against one's afflictions.</p>
<p>If one does not work with one's afflictions and fail to apply the antidotes of mindfulness and vigilance, then the teachings say that, one does not become a practitioner, one is not a real practitioner at all.</p>
<p>One only looks like one, having the form of a practitioner. But in reality, one is not a practitioner.</p>

Verse 3 – How to cultivate ethical discipline:

The faults of the afflictions:
Verse 3 states the need to continually rely on mindfulness and vigilance. The moment one finds an affliction arising and manifesting in one's mind, with mindfulness and vigilance, one should notice its arising and attempt to stop it.
One needs to see for oneself the faults and disadvantages of one's own afflictions. As mentioned in the previous lesson, one needs to think from many perspectives how harmful one's afflictions are, how these harm oneself and others.
As verse 3 says: <i>the moment a delusion appears in my mind, endangering myself and others...</i> hence, one needs to confront and avert in, on the basis on relying on mindfulness and vigilance.
<i>Chandrakirti's Supplement to the Middle Way</i> states the faults and disadvantages of anger in that, when one is upset, one loses one's ability to differentiate between right and wrong.
Even though [the example of] anger was used, but [such a fault] applies equally to such other afflictions as desire as well.
This is quite evident. One has experienced these problems. When one is upset or there is strong desire manifesting in one's heart, one will lose the ability to think clearly. One cannot really distinguish between what is good and bad.
During the times when one is very upset or desirous, one's ability to distinguish between beneficial and harmful, right and wrong becomes greatly diminished. Hence, all the decisions made and actions taken in those states will not end up well.
One has [encountered such] experiences often in the past. One should remember all the mistakes one has made in the past.
By recollecting such past experiences, whenever one notices one is coming under the influence of these strong afflictions, then one should immediately remember that: "If I were to continue [such habitual patterns] of following my afflictions, then the results will not be any different from what I've already experienced in the past."

As beginners, cultivating ethical discipline through modifying conduct of body and speech:

As beginners, the antidotes that one possesses to counteract the afflictions are rather weak. Hence, there are ways for oneself as a beginner to [work with] one's afflictions. This is through modifying one's external physical and verbal behaviors.
[The word <i>Vigilant</i>] in verse 3 means <i>in all of one's conduct</i> . Hence, whatever actions one may undertake physically or verbally, one should also be mindful to check what one is [thinking].
There are many of these advice in the teachings with regards to [changing] and watching one's physical and verbal conduct.
In the teachings, there is the advice to restrain one's senses. For example, there is an advice to not gaze and look at objects that may cause one to develop desire. Hence, it is about restraining one's senses.
The practice of ethical discipline is very important for oneself as a beginner. Ethical discipline here primarily refers to restraining the nonvirtuous deeds of body and speech, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive, offensive and senseless speeches.
Prior to whatever activities one may undertake with one's body or speech, one should examine whether such activities will harm anyone, whether these will cause one's afflictions to arise and increase or not.
Hence, one has to rely on mindfulness and vigilance to do that. If one does notice that such physical and verbal activities that one is about undertake will lead to harming someone and will cause an increase in one's own afflictions, then it is said that, one must turn away from such actions, as well as distancing oneself from the object [of observation] of one's actions.
As beginners, perhaps this is how one can work with one's afflictions through modifying one's conduct and behavior.
Whatever physical or verbal actions these may be, as one is <i>about to engage</i> in that action, one has to rely on mindfulness and vigilance, examine to see if that action is harmful, if it will lead to the manifestation and increase of an affliction or not.
If one becomes aware that one's actions will lead to all of these results, then one is advised to immediately turn one's attention away from the object and not follow through with the action.
For example, in the instructions for developing meditative serenity/ calm abiding, one of the prerequisites is to stay in an isolated place away from the hustle and bustle of life. This is a crucial prerequisite for developing calm abiding.
This is because, if one does not stay in an isolated place away from the hustle and bustle of life and live a simple quiet life, then there will be so much more causes for distractions. The mind will be easily distracted.
It will be very difficult to achieve any form of concentration when the mind keeps getting distracted.
Hence, if one lives a simple life away from a busy life full of distractions in an isolated place, due to the absence of distraction, then it is much easier to develop calm abiding.

Cultivating ethical discipline through meditation:

There are a few causes and conditions for the afflictions to arise. *Vasubhandu's Abhidharmakosa* states that:

- 1) *Being near to the objects that contribute to the generation of the afflictions,*
 - 2) *Having incorrect mental attention,*
 - 3) *Not having abandoned the afflictions.*
- When these three conditions gather, afflictions will arise.*

As beginners, one can start to work with one's afflictions through modifying one's conduct. This is primarily about distancing oneself as much as possible, turning oneself away from the objects that will contribute to the arising of the afflictions.

However, merely turning away from the objects alone will not stop the afflictions from arising nor remove them. Hence, one has to also rely on meditation. In the teachings, it says that the different afflictions have their own antidotes. For example, the meditation on ugliness is prescribed as an antidote for attachment, whereas the meditation on love is an antidote for anger.

Meditating on the path of persons of small capacity to cultivate ethical discipline:

In the *Stages of the path*, there are teachings on the *Path of the person of small capacity*, *Path of the person of middling capacity* and so forth. The path of a person of small capacity is essentially an antidote to the afflictions. What the person strives to do is to discipline his mind against the afflictions.

How correct devotion to the Virtuous Friend is the prerequisite for the cultivation of ethical discipline:

Right from the beginning of the Lam Rim, [the instructions there are meant for one] to work with one's afflictions and reduce them. This starts with the topic of *Correctly Devoting to the Virtuous Friend*.

One of the benefits of this practice is said to be a natural reduction in one's misconduct and afflictions. If one really knows how to correctly devote to the virtuous friend, a correct faith, then one's mind becomes more subdued and disciplined.

In this section of correctly devoting to one's virtuous friend, nine attitudes [from the sutras] are taught here. For example, in relation to one's own guru, from one's own side, one regards oneself as a servant and as an obedient dog to the master.

The teaching in verse 2 is an advice to consider oneself as lower than others. This practice starts with one's own virtuous friend, one considers oneself as lower than one's own spiritual master, to reduce one's self-cherishing and pride.

How to meditate on death and impermanence to cultivate ethical discipline:

In the practice of the person of small capacity, there is the meditation on one's own impending death and impermanence.

If one really reflects and meditates well on one's own mortality and impermanence, a lot of one's mental disturbances/afflictions will naturally subside. It is stated in the Lam Rim, the disadvantages of not remembering one's own death and impermanence is that, one would not remember the Dharma.

If one does not remember the Dharma, that means one's mind is always following one affliction or another. If one meditates well on one's own death and impermanence, then a lot of one's mental disturbances/afflictions will naturally subside.

Correctly meditating on going for refuge to the Three Jewels, karma and its effects to cultivate ethical discipline:

Similarly, if one has a good practice of going for refuge to the Three Jewels, many of one's afflictions will stop.

Likewise, if one meditates well on karma and its effects and finds a definite conviction, then naturally, many of one's mental disturbances/afflictions will also subside.

If one understands well the procedure for practice for a person of small capacity, especially if one is able to reflect and meditate well on these points, then many of one's afflictions can be stopped.

Meditating on the path of persons of middling capacity to cultivate ethical discipline:

When one meditates on the practices of the person of medium capacity, then of course, the positive effect is even greater. This is especially so, if one reflects on the *Four Noble Truths* and the *Twelve Links of Dependent-Origination*.

There are so many instructions on how all the problems [originate from] the afflictions, the source of the problems, as well as the faults of the afflictions and so forth.

Hence, the practice of the person of medium capacity is essentially the *Three Higher Trainings*. If one is able to reflect well on these points and cultivate the antidotes, then so many of one's afflictions can be [controlled].

Meditating on the path of person of great capacity to cultivate ethical discipline to destroy one's self-cherishing:

When one comes to the practices of a person of the greatest capacity, this is essentially destroying one's own self-cherishing.

This is initially done through considering from every single perspective, how self-cherishing is harmful, as well as considering from every single perspective, how extremely beneficial cherishing others is.

If one is able to work with one's self-cherishing and weaken it, then of course, so many afflictions can be [controlled].

Cultivating ethical discipline through the view:

The entire purpose of training one's mind meditating on all such topics found in the persons of small, medium and great capacities is for disciplining one's mind, working with one's afflictions.
[There are the instructions] to deal with one's afflictions through modifying one's conduct .
On that basis, there is meditation . In this context, one can take this meditation to mean the meditation on the entire Lam Rim, <i>Stages of the Path</i> . This comprise of the <i>paths that are shared with the persons of small and medium capacities</i> , as well as the <i>path of the person of great capacity</i> .
Lastly, [there is the instruction] to deal with one's afflictions through the view . Here, one looks at the nature of the afflictions to realize how, the afflictions themselves are empty of existing inherently. For example, one can take one's ignorance, one's grasping at true existence as the object for analysis:
One has deceived oneself when, the very object that one's ignorance believes in, grasps at, has never existed. The object believed in by one's ignorance does not exist, has never existed, [and will never exist]. If one can realize this, then one will not be able to [control] one's afflictions, one will be able to destroy them completely from the root.

Correlating conduct, meditation and the view with the Three Higher Trainings:

One can correlate these three approaches of dealing with the afflictions: conduct, meditation and the view respectively with the Three Higher Trainings.
The higher training in ethical discipline can be related to dealing with the afflictions through modifying one's conduct. This is essentially what ethical discipline is. When one has a good and stable practice of ethical discipline, then one has a much higher chance of succeeding in one's practice of concentration, the second higher training.
This is because, the main obstacle for developing single-pointedness of mind is mental excitement and laxity.
If one has a good practice of ethical discipline, one would have already removed many of these distractions and causes for excitement and laxity. Hence, this makes achieving concentration much easier.
When one achieves meditative serenity, through the force of such a calm abiding, many of one's afflictions do not manifest. But, this does not mean that they have been removed [from the root].
Hence, there is the higher training in wisdom. Therefore, it is said that, the wisdom realizing selflessness is essential. Without this, there is no way one can remove the afflictions completely from the root.
With the generation of the wisdom realizing selflessness and the development of such a wisdom, the various levels of defilements are gradually abandoned. When one directly realizes selflessness, one starts to abandon the path of seeing abandonments. One then moves on to abandon the path of meditation abandonments.
Through the continual familiarization with such a wisdom, the process of removing the knowledge obscurations will begin.
In whatever activities one is doing, walking, traveling, sitting or lying down, one has to continually rely on mindfulness and vigilance to check whether one is coming under the influence of one's afflictions or not.
By dependent on mindfulness and vigilance, the moment one notices the arising of an affliction or when the affliction is about to arise, then the teachings say that, one should apply the antidotes immediately.

Verse 4 – Cultivating joy when meeting with conditions that will increase one's bodhicitta:

<i>Whenever I see beings who are wicked in nature and overwhelmed by violent negative actions and suffering, I shall hold such rare ones dear, as if I had found a precious treasure.</i>
For bodhicitta to increase more and more, one must meet with conditions for it to increase more and more.
Those <i>who are wicked in nature</i> refers to those who are bad-natured. Despite what one may say, they will never change. <i>Overwhelmed by violent negative actions and suffering</i> refer to those who are always involved in nonvirtues, such as people who are always killing, and those who experience tremendous suffering and pain such as being inflicted by strong illnesses.
Practitioners of bodhicitta are so happy when they meet with the conditions that can enable their bodhicitta to increase.
Just like a hungry person is overjoyed when he finds food or when a beggar suddenly becomes very rich is overjoyed, likewise, when the practitioners of bodhicitta meet with bad-natured persons who are always engaging in nonvirtues or those who are suffering, they become very happy, like a poor person who suddenly finds a very precious jewel.
For a practitioner of bodhicitta, when they see such bad-natured sentient beings who are always engaging in nonvirtue, they generate very strong compassion, when they reflect on the suffering these people will have to experience in the future as a result of their current actions.
Likewise, when they find people who are suffering tremendously, such as being very sick and so forth, they feel as if they have found a treasure.

Verse 5 – Cultivating patience:

***When, out of envy, others mistreat me with abuse, insults, or the like,
I shall accept defeat and offer the victory to others.***

This is how the practitioners of bodhicitta will act when they are in such situations. *When, out of envy, others mistreat me with abuse, insults, or the like:* This refer to others scolding one directly or criticizing one in one's absence.

Mistreat here means, someone scolds, insults one and so forth out of jealousy. In general, one may not be at fault in this life, as one did not do anything [to deserve such mistreats], but one may still receive such [experiences], directly or indirectly. Hence, in a conventional sense, such mistreats are unjustified and uncalled for.

The verse is saying that, when one experiences such unjustified mistreatment, the first thing to do is:

***Not to put up a defense to prove one's innocence/ anything.
At the same time, one should remain calm/ mentally undisturbed.
Within such a mental state, one should accept defeat and offer the victory to the other party.***

The teachings say that, the practice of generosity and ethical discipline are very important. The reason one cultivates them is essentially to accumulate merit and purify one's negativities.

In such situations where others, motivated by jealousy, accuse one of having done something one is innocent of, point out faults one does not possess, criticize one directly or belittle one in one's absence, in all of these situations, one should be patient/ mentally undisturbed, accept such mistreatment and offer the victory to others. This is because:

The benefits of doing so greatly exceeds the benefit that one gets from the practices of generosity and ethical discipline.

Motivated by others' jealousy of one, when one is accused, faced with verbal abuse, being criticized in one's absence, if one succeeds in remaining mentally calm, not disturbed, is able to accept the defeat and offer the victory to others, then the purification one experiences will be greater than what one gets from the practices of generosity and ethical discipline.

Likewise, the accumulation of merit will also be greater than these practices as well.

To practice patience, there must be the causes and conditions to engage them. One therefore needs the object for cultivating it, someone who is angry with one, opposes one or dislikes one. This is an object for the practice of patience.

Since these are the conditions for the development of patience, hence, such a person should be worshiped in the way one would worship the Dharma. This is what *Shantideva's Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* has taught.

When one is cultivating patience, it is helpful to think how, one would never meet with the results of an action one did not commit. Hence, when someone accuses one of something one really did not do in this life, but since it is not possible to meet with an effect of an action one did not do, this means that, one is experiencing an action one has committed in past lives.

If one thinks well about karma and its effects, although one did not do anything in this life, one must have done so in one's past lives. One is merely experiencing the ripening effects in this life.

Conventionally, when one is falsely accused of something one is innocent of, one is justified to correct such misperceptions and even get upset. Here, if one practices patience and accepts [defeat] when one is innocent, then one is foolish and wrong.

Student: Out of compassion, should one not correct the person, to stop him from continuing his mistakes and not encouraging him [with such behaviors]?

Khenrinpoche: In the first place, why does one react to justify oneself in such situations? This shows that the mind is already disturbed/ unhappy. In the course of doing so, there will be anger involved. But if one's mind is undisturbed, then of course there is room for discussion.

One reacts because one is mentally disturbed. Whatever justification [for doing so] is [always done] out of anger.

Whatever justifications that caused the other party to say whatever he has said, if one justifies [in response], he is not going to be unresponsive but will further justifies himself in return. One will get more upset with those further justifications.

This will lead to further to-and-fro exchanges, which do not benefit anyone but will cause [everyone] to be more agitated.

This is one's experiences in life, whatever the facts are, one gets upset whenever one is accused of something. When one does not apply these antidotes, that is how the problem starts and escalates.

Distinguishing the person and his afflictions to cultivate patience:

When someone does something one does not like, insults, criticizes one and so forth, one holds onto his **behavior**, which becomes the justification for one to get upset at that **person**.

Aryadeva's Four Hundred Verses said that, one has to make a distinction between the person and his actions. He quoted the Buddha as saying that:

One should regard the person's afflictions as the enemy and not the person himself.

An example is given: A patient who is possessed by a spirit. When such a patient is brought to a doctor/ healer, who is aware of this spirit possession, then it does not matter what the patient may do to the doctor, he never gets upset with the patient.
This is because, the doctor understands that it is not the patient but the spirit who controls the patient, causing him to be uncontrolled. Likewise, one should not view the person as the enemy, but his afflictions, as the enemy.
One must distinguish between the person and his actions. One should never be upset with the person.
<i>What one needs to oppose is anger. Hence, the person should never be the object of one's anger. He should only be an object of one's patience and compassion.</i>
With an undisturbed, sincere, affectionate and concerned mind, one can address the problem itself with the person, not the person, by saying: "Perhaps it is this and not that."
Hence, the person is only an object of one's patience, compassion and not one's opponent. Therefore, he becomes the object to which one offers the victory to.
This verse is essentially an advice on the practice of patience. For someone who considers himself a practitioner, then this is what he should do. Such practices go against what the conventional world would accept.
The worldly practice is that, when one is criticized or insulted, one must not remain silent but should retaliate.
Even in the conventional sense it is justifiable, when one is in the right, then one feels even more compelled to redress the wrong and retaliate. The problems then intensify and escalate.
When one meets with such a situation, it is very difficult for one to accept what is taught in the verse, to put up with it. Yet, if one is able to practice this, then it becomes very beneficial.

Verse 6 – Cultivating patience by viewing one's harmdoer as one's guru:

This verse also teaches the practice of patience, but the practice taught here is even more difficult than the previous verse.
This is because: <i>When someone whom I have benefited and in whom I have great hopes, Gives me terrible harm, I shall regard that person as my holy Guru.</i>
The approach is rather similar. If one is a real practitioner, then one has to remember the workings of karma and its effects.
When one experiences all such situations mentioned in this verse, one has to remember that one is experiencing the effects of an action that oneself has done, if it is not in this life, then definitely sometimes in the past. If one can view such experiences as the purification of one's past negativities, then perhaps one can really experience such situations with joy.
Instead of being patient, if one were to retaliate, then this would cause the other party to accumulate more negativities. As a result, he may go to the lower realms. If this happens, then it will be as if one is sending him to the lower realms.
The practice of patience here, can be done within thinking about karma and its effects, the qualities of the person, how cherishing others is the basis for all good qualities.
When attacked by others, seeing that as an attack on one's real enemy, one's self-grasping, not oneself:
When one encounters difficulties from others, then it is very helpful to make a distinction between the person and his afflictions or his self-cherishing, just as one regards oneself and one's ignorance as something separate.
One does make a distinction between oneself and one's afflictions thinking: "I am not my afflictions, they are not me."
In reality, one is not one's self-grasping. There is a difference between "me" and "my self-grasping". Hence, the person and his self-grasping are indeed different.
When someone criticizes, scolds or does something one does not like, one can view it as criticism or an attack on one's self-grasping, not against oneself. One needs to think that the person is attacking/ harming one's self-grasping and not oneself.
For those who really see/ realize the point, when they experience all such difficulties being directed at them by someone else, they see it as attacks on their afflictions/ ego, and not an attack on them. Hence, they see it as an attack on his actual enemy.
The person who understands this would even say "thank you" to the other person. This is because, the other person is really doing him a service in that, he is actually attacking the real enemy, the afflictions.
The real enemy is one's self-cherishing. This is what one needs to oppose. Hence, someone who opposes/ attacks one's self-cherishing is definitely not the enemy.
As mentioned before, all of these points are rather straightforward. These are evidently easy to understand as common sense. Yet, they are very difficult to practice. Since it is difficult, then one just have to put in effort and strive at it.

Summarizing Verse 5 – Cultivating patience:

<i>When, out of envy, others mistreat me with abuse, insults, or the like, I shall accept defeat and offer the victory to others.</i>
In these situations when one experiences such mistreatment from others motivated by their own jealousies, this verse is saying that, one's mind should remain undisturbed and train in accepting the situation as a loss, as a defeat.
This is an advice that is meant for the practice of patience. When one experiences these situations, if one remains undisturbed and abides in the practice of patience, it is said that the merit and benefits that one gets from this practice greatly exceeds the merits that are accumulated from the practices of generosity and ethical discipline.
Likewise, a much more powerful purification of one's negativities is also effected, if one remains in the practice of patience.
In such situations, if one's mind becomes disturbed and unable to abide in patience, then one's hatred will greatly destroys one's merit. <i>Shantideva's Engaging the Bodhisattva Deeds</i> states in verse 6.2:
<i>There is no negativity like hatred, and no fortitude like patience.</i>
In such situations, this verse advises one to accept defeat and take on the loss. This can be related to karma: Since one would never experience the result of an action that oneself did not create in the past, hence, there is the point in accepting the loss.

Verse 6 – Cultivating patience, benefiting others without any expectations in return, viewing harmdoer as teacher:

<i>When someone whom I have benefited and in whom I have great hopes, Gives me terrible harm, I shall regard that person as my holy Guru.</i>
The objects mentioned in this verse are the persons whom one has helped and/ or those whom one has placed much expectation/ hopes onto. When such persons harm, take advantage of one, one is advised to regard them as one's gurus.
Generally, when those one thinks has helped greatly or one has great expectations of do harm one, one finds it more difficult to accept than someone whom one has not helped nor has much expectations of. The latter person does not hurt one as much.
Generally, if someone whom one has helped greatly and in whom one has great expectations of were to harm one, the people in the world would consider this to be unacceptable.
However, the advice here is for someone who is a serious and dedicated practitioner of bodhicitta mind training. The advice is thus to regard others whom one has benefited and in whom one has great hopes of, but has harmed one, as one's gurus.
The practice of patience is done at the time when one is upset or angry. To do so, one needs the condition/ object. It is only when one is in a situation of being harmed by someone, would this become an opportunity to practice patience. The harmer then becomes an essential condition for one's practice of patience. Hence, one can regard and see one's harmer as one's guru.
Often, when one extends help to others, this is done with expectations. One has expectations of how things should turn out.
However, in the practice of bodhicitta and its perfections such as generosity, ethical discipline and so forth, whatever practices or help one extends to others, one should do so without any expectations in return.
One does so even without the expectations of the accumulation of merit and wishing to experience its positive effects.
Whatever beneficial help one extends to others, all these have to be done without the slightest expectations of any rewards, not even the positive ripening of one's own good karma.
The problem with one is that, when one extends help, one has all sorts of expectations. The greater the expectations, the greater the hurt [one will experience] when these are not met.
In these situations when one is harmed by those one has benefited, if one has extended such help sincerely in the first place without any expectations, then if one is harmed in return, due to the lack of expectations, the hurt would not be as great.
Even though there is hurt, but the pain that comes from [the devastation of] one's expectations will not be experienced.
In the context of the Mahayana mind training, bodhicitta, it is said that whatever practices one does, these should never be done with any expectations of any rewards [in this life] or the ripening of positive karma in future lives.
Perhaps this is not expecting any rewards whatsoever that have to do with any samsaric experiences.
For example, if one examines the mindset of a person of small capacity, he does accumulate merit by abandoning nonvirtues as well as practice generosity, but deep down, all such practices are done with the expectations of something in return.
Hence, a person of small capacity does engage in the practice of generosity expecting wealth in future lives. They practice patience perhaps seeking for a pleasant physical appearance in the future. Although such practices are Dharma, nevertheless, these are done with expectations. The result is essentially a rebirth as a human or a celestial being in samsara.
These are essentially experiences that are still included in cyclic existence.

If one compares those who give to charity having expectations in this life, versus someone who practice charity seeking happiness in the future lives, both expectations are different.
But perhaps those who give with the expectations of rewards in this life will face more difficulties and unhappiness. Perhaps the persons of middling and great capacities would not be looking for any rewards, or the ripening of good karma.
This is because, the person of middling capacity is not seeking [the results of] samsara, he is looking for liberation from it. Hence, one can perhaps say that such persons do not have such expectations of rewards or the ripening of good karma.
The persons of great capacity seeks enlightenment to benefit others. Hence, perhaps one also cannot say that such persons have expectations of rewards and so forth as well.
It is said in the teachings that, in the practice of bodhicitta mind training, whatever practices one is doing, these should not be done with any sense of expectations of rewards nor the ripening of good karma and so forth.
For such a person, when he receives harm from someone whom he has benefited greatly, he is advised to look at his harmdoer as the teacher that reminds him of the need to practice without expecting any rewards.
For one, when one extends help to others, these people become one's friends. Then when such persons harm one, immediately one becomes the enemy. This is evidently clear that, friends do become enemies.
This is a characteristic and a fault of samsara. This is shown in the teachings how samsara is uncertain in that, friends can become enemies right away due to some conditions. When one receives harm from someone whom one has benefited, one can then look at him as a teacher teaching one this particular fault of cyclic existence, the fault of uncertainty.
There is a point in regarding such a person as one's teacher/ guru. He is a teacher of patience who teaches one how not to have expectations of rewards as well as the faults of cyclic existence.
Likewise, thinking about karma also applies here. If one did not create the cause in the past, there is no way one would experience the results. The reason one experiences others returning harm for the benefits one has extended to them. is just due to one's harming others in the past. In that sense, then it is appropriate that one receives harm in return.
It is clear that, one experiences problems and sufferings due to one's negativities. Otherwise, there is no reason why one experiences problems and sufferings.
Taking the superiors who have abandoned negativities as examples, it is said that they will never experience problems. This is because, they have already abandoned the cause of suffering.
The fact that one experiences problems and harms is the sign showing that one has negativities in one's mind. Due to the negativities one has accumulated in the past, one is now experiencing harm from the person.
Hence, it is essentially the doing of one's negativities that is causing the person to dislike and have malice towards one. In return, this person accumulates negative karma as well. If one thinks about this, one is essentially responsible for his accumulation of negative karma.
Hence, these lines of reasoning show that it is all the more inappropriate to get upset and be angry.
The Kadampa masters teach that the best thing to do in such situations, when one receives harm, abuse, slander, hurt and so forth in return of helping others, is to meditate on compassion. One should even pray that:
<i>Having done those things to me, by being associated with me, may they have the fortunes to achieve enlightenment.</i>
In general, one regards one's virtuous friend/ guru, the one who bestows on one the vows, oral transmissions, teachings, advice and so forth, as very kind. It is generally not appropriate to disregard their teachings and advice.
One can receive vows from the teacher, but if one does not keep them, one will not be able to achieve anything. If one receives teachings from the virtuous friend but if one does not practice them, one will not be able to achieve anything.
Likewise, when faced with the enemy, one's teacher of patience, if one does not practice patience, then one will not be able to achieve anything as well.

What is a virtuous friend and his role:

One's guru is essentially someone who is effective for one's mind in that, through his teachings and guidance, one's mind actually changes and transforms. The one who can effect that for one is then one's virtuous friend.
In reality, one's virtuous friends/ gurus have to be someone who can tell one assertively without reservations whenever one is in the wrong and one would be able to accept. It is such a relationship that will be effective.
But of course, for that to happen, there must be a good and stable relationship between the teacher and his disciple. The disciple should also have faith and devotion towards him. Otherwise, it will not work.
If the relationship and connection is not strong and stable, there is no faith from the disciple's side, then if the teacher were to point out one's faults, instead of one being benefited, there is only problems and harms to oneself.

The story of how Marpa treated Milarepa is well known to all. [This is a classic] example of [the benefits of perfect guru devotion], how Milarepa is able to bear so much hardships such that, his mind became so transformed as a result of his relationship with his teacher, Marpa. However, in these days and times,
<i>If one examines the people in the role of teachers, most of the time, they have to be politically correct. They have to say things the listeners like to hear and act according to the wishes of the listeners. Hence, one does not see any progress on both sides, neither the teacher nor the students can progress.</i>
The roles of the teacher and the disciples sometimes become blurred. I wonder sometimes who is the actual teacher?
The great yogi <i>Padampa Sangye</i> said that, the guru's scolding one is like the recitation of a wrathful mantra. Of course, such an advice is meant for those who have faith and devotion [in their gurus].
Whether one has committed a mistake or not, when one's guru scolds one, even in the presence of others, if one has faith, then one is able to regard such a scolding as a wrathful mantra. One usually thinks quite highly of wrathful mantras, that they are very powerful. One has no issues with them, happily adopts and recites them.
In fact, getting scolded by one's guru is one of the best antidote to one's ego. The reason one cannot bear such scoldings in the first place from anyone is due only to one's ego/ pride. One simply cannot accept and bear it.
It is said that, a scolding is like a wrathful mantra and a beating is like an initiation. If one has the idea that receiving a beating is like receiving an initiation, one would have no issues with it. One would receive it happily.
Generally, people like to receive initiations. It is said that, a beating from one's guru is like receiving an initiation in that, a beating from the virtuous friend is said to purify a lot of negativities. Of course, this is again an advice for those with faith.
If there is any obstacle to be pacified, this is that which will pacify it. If there is anything that can bless one, this is that which can do so. When one gets a beating or a scolding, that is the real blessing. This is because, it is a remedy to one's ego/ pride.
When one's mind changes/ transforms for the better, when there is an antidote/ remedy to one's afflictions/ ego, this is the real blessing. Therefore it is said that, if there is any blessing, <i>this is</i> the blessing.

How to train after having correctly devoted to one's virtuous friend:

These are advice for practitioners, those who know how to think. It is just essentially adopting a different mental perspective. If one knows how to practice, which means knowing how to think, then it is said that all such bearing of hardships in the form of putting up with scoldings, beatings, seeing one's enemies as [gurus] and so forth, all such practices become possible.
The teachings say that, whomever one relates to, whether the person is a friend or an enemy, if one can regard them as one's teacher, then one will always be able to stay happy. If one practices and trains, all of these are possible.
If one cultivates it, one will be able to adopt such perspectives, regarding one's enemy as one's guru. Whomever one meets with, if one is able to regard them as one's teacher, it is said that, one will always be happy wherever one is.
This is similar to what is mentioned in the <i>Guru puja</i> . Verse 96 says:
<i>Even if the environment and beings are filled with the fruits of negativity, and unwished for sufferings pour down like rain, I seek your blessings to take these miserable conditions as a path, by seeing them as causes to exhaust the results of my negative karma.</i>
In one's life, when one's environment is filled with the results of nonvirtues and sufferings pour upon one like rain, one should regard such experiences as the result of the ripening of one's nonvirtue.
In such situations, one trains to be able to bring all such obstacles and unfavorable conditions and [transform] them into positive conditions that will contribute to one's [gaining] enlightenment.
In short, whatever good or bad experiences that occur to one, these are all the results of one's own karma.
If one can remember and accept this [fact], then one will always be calm and happy.

Distinguishing between the person that exists and the afflictions that ultimately do not exist:

As mentioned in the previous lesson, <i>Aryadeva's Four Hundred Verses</i> explained how to make a distinction between the person and his afflictions. Making such a distinction is very important.
Likewise, <i>Chandrakirti</i> said that, when experiencing harm from others, one should attribute the problem to the person's afflictions and not the person. Hence, one should not get upset with the person.
The teachings say that, one should not oppose nor confront the person, rather, one should oppose that person's afflictions.
<i>One should have affections for the person, but oppose his afflictions.</i>

Likewise, one does not see oneself as one's pride. Oneself and one's pride are different.
However, when one receives harm from others, the reason one cannot tolerate them is due to viewing that as a personal attack on oneself. One tends to conflict oneself and one's ego as one.
But if one can work towards the perspective that, the harmdoer's abuse is directed at one's ego instead of oneself, then it makes it easier to tolerate [the abuse and manage one's afflictions].
The reality is that, one's afflictions like one's anger, pride, ego and so forth, these are one's real main enemies.
Hence, when someone harms one's afflictions/ pride, in reality, one should actually be very happy and thankful to the person.
But of course, this is not what one usually thinks. However, if one really thinks well and see that, there is indeed a difference between oneself and one's afflictions, then it is really possible to see that the abuse and harm are directed at one's ego, pride and afflictions, rather than viewing it as personal attack.
If one sees the point behind such a distinction, this will make a difference. But of course for one, it is difficult to accept.

Signs that show one is not a practitioner of Dharma:

If one is honest [with oneself] and thinks well, even though one calls oneself as a practitioner and accepts karma, but when one experiences a small problem, one cannot or do not want to deal with the situation, much less tolerate it.
This is a very obvious sign one is not practicing Dharma at all. It does not matter how many recitations of mantras, doing sadhanas, making prayers one does everyday of one's life, even when some small problems happens, one cannot tolerate. This is a very clear sign that, one is not practicing the Dharma.
When someone stares at one in an unfriendly way, or says some short unpleasant words, even that alone one cannot tolerate.
If one thinks about it, then what sort of Dharma practice has one done all these while? There is nothing to show for. Hence, one has to reflect on this:
<i>Practicing Dharma means changing one's mind for the better, by subduing one's mind. The result of practicing Dharma is that, regardless of whether one is happy, sad or suffering, One's mind has to be relaxed, calm and virtuous.</i>
Perhaps this may have been taught by <i>Guntang Rinpoche</i> : One looks like a Dharma practitioner when the weather is good. When things are going well, one keeps up the appearance of doing one's prayers, practice and so forth. One has the appearance and looks like someone who is practicing Dharma.
But when something bad happens, then one does not know how to deal with the situation. Immediately, the appearance of a practitioner is gone right there. The teachings say that, if one wishes to become a Dharma practitioner, one should not become like this. One has to be an actual practitioner and not just look like one, merely having the form of a practitioner.
Unfortunately, one is like that, only having the form of a practitioner, one says one does this or that, looking like one is practicing. When the situation is good, of course one thinks one is practicing, but when some challenging difficulties happen, then one does not know how to react and does so negatively, not tolerating nor accepting it.
This is a sign that one has <i>never</i> been practicing Dharma. Hence, the teachings tell one to keep this in mind, one should really try to become a practitioner and not just look like one.
There are many such practical, straightforward and realistic advice on practice one can find in the sayings of the great Kadampa masters of the past. They immediately tell one unreservedly one's faults and what one needs to do.
Hence, one should regard such instructions as an indication to one's faults, telling one one's problems and what one needs to do with them, how to eliminate them.
Therefore, one should regard whatever teachings that one learns and practices as a clear indication of one's faults, what one needs to do. Whatever one learns and then practices, these must contribute towards transforming one's mind for the better.
<i>Particularly, such practices must result in one's afflictions becoming weaker over time.</i>

Verse 7 – Cultivating Giving and Taking:

<i>In short, both directly and indirectly, do I offer every happiness and benefit to all my mothers. I shall secretly take upon myself all their harmful actions and suffering.</i>
[Here it involves two situations], directly, if there is any benefit that one can offer to others, then one should do so. [Indirectly,] one takes upon oneself all the sufferings of others. This shows the practice of <i>Giving and Taking, Tonglen</i> .
There is a mind training teaching that says: <i>When I experience problems and suffering, may this dry up the oceans of suffering of all sentient beings. When I experience the happiness of having accumulated merits of the past, may all sentient beings also experience this.</i>

If such positive mental attitudes are ingrained in one, then this will show up on the practical level in that, when one meets with destitute and the poor, one will happily and readily give food, clothing and other necessities.
Even when that is not possible, where one cannot do anything directly on a practical level, one can still secretly do it. This means mentally dedicating it away. Since it is done in one's mind, nobody can see it, this is one way to explain <i>secret</i> .
In <i>Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds</i> , it is said that the practice of <i>Exchanging Self and Other</i> is to be done in secret. Why is such a practice a secret in the first place? This is because, such a practice is something that cannot fit the mental capacities of the Hearers and Solitary Realizers.
Amongst bodhisattvas, there are those of the dull and sharp faculties. It is said that this practice cannot even fit the mental capacities of the bodhisattvas of the dull faculties. Such a practice is only meant for those bodhisattvas of sharp faculties.

Verse 8 – Cultivating wisdom:

<i>Undefined by the stains of the superstitions of the eight worldly concerns, May I, by perceiving all phenomena as illusory, be released from the bondage of attachment.</i>
This verse shows the practice of wisdom. It is said that one should dedicate the merits after any practice, which has to be sealed with emptiness. This is how one should understand this verse.
The three types of worldly concerns:
With regards to the <i>eight worldly concerns</i> , there are three forms. The usual one is the <i>eight black worldly dharmas</i> , then there are the <i>eight white worldly dharmas</i> and the <i>eight mixed worldly dharmas*</i> .
Whatever practices one does, these should not be stained with the motivation of the eight worldly concerns. This usually refers to the eight black worldly dharmas, which essentially means having the attachment to the happiness of this life.
It is the view of the world that people: Desire happiness and do not desire suffering, desire to be praised and do not desire to be criticized, desire to have a good reputation and do not desire to have a bad reputation, [desire to have material gains and do not desire to have material loss.]
Faults of the eight black worldly dharma:
These are one's worldly concerns. Whatever one does in life, if [the action of doing so] is [motivated] by such worldly concerns, even if it is a Dharma practice, but if it is done mixed with the motivations of these eight worldly concerns, then even such practices do not become a Dharma practice.
It is not about rejecting pleasures, material gains, praise and good reputation. In fact, there are [good reasons] for them. The point is about not being emotionally attached and involved with them such that, one's mind becomes disturbed by them.
If one is very emotionally involved and attached to them, wanting praise, good reputation, material gains and pleasures, then one would mentally be building up a lot of expectations, hopes and fears. Hence, the greater one's attachment to them, the greater one's expectations, hopes and fears.
Driven by one's expectations, hopes, fears and worries, one becomes a hypocrite, pretending to behave and speak in ways one does not actually feel like doing. One has to smile and say nice things to others when actually one does not feel so.
<i>One does not mean what one does or say, but one is doing so only because one wants something in return.</i>
Due to attachment to gains, praise, reputations and pleasures, one behaves in various hypocritical ways, saying and doing things that one does not really mean to. There will be some who will realize this, when this happens, then they will lose trust in one's [integrity]. Such problems come because one strongly wishes to be famous, be praised, receive profit and pleasures.
One does need material development, some pleasures and it is alright to be praised and have a good reputation. However, if one becomes very emotionally involved and attached to them, then this just becomes a condition for one to meet with many problems, fears, anxieties, worries and disappointments.
It happens to everyone, even those so called practitioners/ teachers. Due to attachment to praise and reputation, one can see them putting up a false front, pretending to act holy, saying all sort of things just to put on an act.
Sometimes even for people who are meditating, deep down, they may be seeking praise. Even though they are not meditating, but they have to put on a front as if they can sit very well and meditate. All these simply because, they want others to regard them as a good meditator.
Whatever virtuous activities one may be doing, be it meditation, study, or any practices, one has to check [one's motivation] to ensure that the so-called practice of Dharma actually becomes Dharma, and not merely look like Dharma.
<i>By perceiving all phenomena as illusory:</i> Whenever one dedicates one's merits, one should seal such dedications with emptiness. When doing such practices as giving, one can bring to mind how the agent, action and object are all illusory.
If one is able to perceive everything as illusory, then one would <i>be released from the bondage of grasping</i> , which means one would be freed from the bondage of the apprehension of true existence.

Advice on this text for one's daily practice:

These eight verse of thought transformation is very short, concise and yet very effective. It will be very good if one can memorize this text and treat it as a daily prayer.
If one can recite this everyday from memory and reflect on it as one recites, then perhaps this would be the best and most effective daily prayer/ sadhana.
There are so many prayers and sadhanas one may be reciting one's daily life, but if one thinks about it, at one's level [of spiritual development], what real practical benefits would [such sadhanas] offer to one in one's daily life?
However, this is not saying that, one should stop one's sadhanas and prayers one is already doing.
<i>Khenrinpoche:</i> I did mention this before, where someone has asked me whether he can stop doing some of the prayers because he has too many. I gave the answer then.
If one is not already reflecting or meditating anyway, then it is better to recite some prayers than not doing so. But in the case of someone who is really reflecting or meditating on the teachings such as this prayer consistently, then even if one misses out on other prayers, I do not see anything serious about it.
However, if one is not doing this, as well as also not doing other daily recitations, then that would really be pointless.
This prayer is short, but it is not difficult to understand, even though it is difficult to implement. So if one can memorize it and reflect on it daily, then there will be practical benefits. Particularly, when one meets with challenges, difficulties, having to associate with someone closely on a regular basis whom one is upset with.
Many a times, these persons may be friends or close ones, but all it takes is a mere short unpleasant incident, then the person immediately becomes an enemy. In such situations, it will be helpful if one brings to mind these verses.
<i>The eight verses are advice for one to be patient, to view everyone as precious, dear, loved ones, as a friend.</i>

*The eight mixed worldly dharmas are actions done without worldly concern but with the self-cherishing [attitude]. The eight white worldly dharmas are actions done without the self-cherishing [attitude] but with the [self-grasping conception].

Lama Zopa Rinpoche – How to practice Dharma: Teachings on the Eight Worldly Dharmas, Page 100.

*Another explanation has it that:

- 1) black are actions that both look non-virtuous and are done with non-virtuous motivation,
- 2) mixed are actions that look virtuous but are done with non-virtuous motivation, and
- 3) white are those such as this example: a monk who is not a particularly good one acts very properly, as if he is always like that, when he is in public so that people will not criticize the Sangha

Commentary on the Eight Verses of Thought Transformation –

By His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Dharamsala, India 1981, posted on Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, updated Aug 18, 2014 .

The Wheel-Weapon Mind Training:

There are two systems for cultivating the mind of enlightenment/ bodhicitta, these are the *Seven Fold Cause and Effect Instruction* and *Exchanging Self and Other*.

The tradition of the Seven fold cause and effect instruction is [intended] for [the bodhisattvas] of duller faculties. The system of Exchanging self and other is [intended] for [the bodhisattvas] of sharp faculties.

This text called *Wheel-Weapon Mind Training* comes under the system of Exchanging self and other. This lineage came through *Lama Serlingpa*, who then transmitted it to *Lama Atisha*.

Homage: This text starts with *Homage to the Three Jewels*. This is essentially the practice of going for refuge to the Three Jewels. It is said that whatever activities one undertakes, one should always do so starting with refuge.

What is refuge:

Hence, it becomes very important to know what refuge is. To have refuge in entrusting oneself to the Three Jewels, one must firstly have very strong **1)** fear of suffering. This could be a great strong fear of the suffering one will have to experience in the lower realms. One also need a very strong **2)** conviction that the Three Jewels can protect one from this suffering.

The *faith* that is engendered through certain knowledge of these two factors is refuge.

Essentially, it is a faith that arises through knowledge. Hence, to have refuge, on one hand, one needs real fear of suffering, be it the suffering of the lower realms and/ or the suffering of cyclic existence. One also needs the conviction that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have the power to protect one from these two types of suffering.

To produce the certain knowledge/ conviction, one must know what the Three Jewels are and their qualities. Hence, in the previous module, the Three Objects of Refuge and their Qualities were taught.

For genuine refuge to arise in one's heart, there must the certainty of conviction, that one is absolutely sure that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have the power to protect one from the sufferings of the lower realms and cyclic existence.

As often mentioned, **one of the purpose of studying and learning the different aspects of the Buddhadharma, is to help one develop refuge in one's hearts.** For example, one of the whole purpose of studying the tathagata essence/ lineage is to get a better idea of the Three Jewels, one's objects of refuge. The topic of lineage/ Buddha nature is therefore very important.

The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha possess the capacities to free one from one's suffering, but if from one's side, one does not possess the [prerequisites] to actualize the Three Jewels from one's own side, then it does not matter what they can do, one lacks the critical and crucial ingredients that makes it possible for one to become them, then the Three Jewels are merely that.

Therefore, understanding the lineage is very important. This is because, it is on the basis of understanding it that one sees for oneself that, one can actualize the state of the Three Jewels oneself.

When one sees all these points, then an aspiration to actualize the Three Jewels will arise in one's heart.

The usual defining characteristic of the entity of *refuge* is the:

Faith of conviction in the Three Jewels' power to protect one from the sufferings of the lower realms and cyclic existence.

The refuge of a person of small capacity:

When one reflects on the sufferings that oneself will have to endure in the hells, as a hungry ghost and an animal, through such a reflection, one develops fear. Based on such a fear, if one is convinced that the Three Jewels can protect one from such fears, then one would have the refuge of a person of small capacity.

In the case of such a person, the objects of refuge that he entrusts to is the same, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. But what qualifies his refuge as a refuge of a person of small capacity is from his own perspective. Hence, the difference does not come from the side of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, but from the practitioner's side. In this case, it is the type of fear.

Khenrinpoche: If one is stricken with a serious illness, one would generally be quite fearful. Motivated by such a fear, one then entrusts oneself to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Does this become refuge? If one is very confident that the Buddha can protect one from this sickness in this life, is that refuge? Is it virtue?

This is one's usual refuge, one's usual practice, is it not? Is it not the case that, it is difficult for one to conceive of future sufferings? One considers oneself as practical and realistic, if one encounters any problems of this life, one will think that: "The Buddha can protect me!" Since one seeks his protection for such situations, is that not refuge and virtue?

Sometimes, some people are so stressed about not finding a job, they then take refuge in order to find a job. Is that not refuge, virtue and Dharma? Is such refuge a cause of happiness or a cause of suffering?

Student: It is refuge but not virtue. If it is virtue, the motivation has to be [pure].

<p>Khenrinpoche: One has to [settle] down and really think what exactly is refuge, to examine within oneself whether one has refuge or not. One is not obliged to take refuge. Why should one entrust oneself and place oneself under the care of the Three Jewels? What is the purpose and benefits one will get?</p>
<p>On the other hand, what if one does not take refuge in the Three Jewels? What would happen?</p>
<p>When one goes for refuge, there must be a reason, a purpose, for going for refuge and entrusting oneself to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Otherwise, one says one goes for refuge, but one cannot be sure of the purpose of doing so.</p>
<p>If that is the case, then refuge is mere words. If one says that, one believes in the Buddha, takes refuge in and entrusts oneself to Him because, one wishes to be free of sicknesses and have a successful life, then one can also take refuge in worldly gods.</p>
<p>There are many entities like nagas, land lord spirits, worldly gods and so forth that actually have the power to grant some of one's wishes and solve some of one's problems in life. If they can perform such functions, would that not be sufficient?</p>
<p>Why does one choose Buddha instead? If one says that one takes refuge in Buddha to free oneself from a certain illness, would it not be better if one directs one's single-pointed faith towards the doctor? If one has faith in him and follows his advice, one can recover. Hence there is no need for Buddha.</p>
<p>Khenrinpoche: Do you see my point? I am not shouting, but you must know what I am driving at. These reasons alone are not sufficient to explain why one chooses Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, one's objects of refuge. One really has to think hard.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>The minimum reason from one's side for taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, Is a real fear of the suffering one will experience in the lower realms once one is born there.</i></p>
<p>For such a fear to arise, one must first have an understanding and some conviction in karma and its effects in that, one will definitely experience the results of the actions one has already accumulated.</p>
<p>It is only upon such a conviction, when one considers all the negativities one has accumulated in this and all past lives, how these are certain to ripen as an experience in the lower realms that, real fear arises. Hence, there are quite a lot of considerations to resolve from one's side.</p>
<p>One must also have the conviction that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have the power to protect one from this fear.</p>
<p>To have such a conviction, again, one must also consider many things. How would one come to the conclusion that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha can actually protect one from such sufferings?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Hence, such a minimum mindset is the entry level to qualify as refuge, the refuge of the person of small capacity.</i></p>
<p>The refuge of a person of middling capacity:</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>For a person of middling capacity, his is the fear of the sufferings of all of cyclic existence. He also has the faith of conviction that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha can protect him from such fears.</i></p>
<p>For such a refuge to arise, one must have a very good understanding of the <i>Four Noble Truths</i>.</p>
<p>To have the refuge of a person of middling capacity, one must definitely have renunciation, the mind of definite emergence, a determination to be free.</p>
<p>The refuge of a person of great capacity in general:</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>The refuge of a person of great capacity is a mind that is unable to bear the sufferings that all sentient beings are experiencing in cyclic existence. He also has a mind that wishes to free them from these sufferings. Motivated by that, he has the faith of conviction in and entrusts himself to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.</i></p>
<p>The attitude of renunciation is also indispensably needed for a person of great capacity. In fact, this determination to be free must be even stronger than the renunciation possessed by the person of middling capacity.</p>
<p>Not only is he determined to free himself from suffering, he also wishes all sentient beings to be free from these sufferings. In that sense, his determination to be free for sentient beings' sake, his mind of definite emergence is even stronger than the persons of middling capacity.</p>
<p>The refuge of a person of great capacity of the Mantrayana:</p>
<p>The Mahayana/ great vehicle is divided into two: The Perfection Vehicle <i>Paramitayana</i>, and the The Mantra Vehicle <i>Mantrayana</i>.</p>
<p>Practitioners of both of these vehicles are the same in having the mind that is unable to bear the sufferings of all sentient beings. Both also go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha with such a mind.</p>
<p>However, the practitioner of Mantrayana has greater compassion in that, he is unable to bear that sentient beings have to wait so long, for over three countless great eons, to accumulate enough merits for him to achieve enlightenment.</p>
<p>Hence, he wishes to achieve enlightenment much faster than that. In fact, some of them even wishes to achieve enlightenment in one life time in one body. It is with such an attitude that he goes for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.</p>

How refuge amongst the various paths are differentiated:

One can see that, whether it is the refuge of the person of small, middling, great capacities, and within the great capacity, the practitioners of the Perfection and Mantra vehicles, they are all the same in entrusting themselves to the Three Jewels.
Yet, their minds/ attitudes of refuge are different. This difference comes from their own reasons for taking refuge.
The qualities of the refuge of practitioners become increasingly <i>profound</i> as one examines the different persons of succeeding order. The attitudes of renunciation and being unable to bear a specific suffering also become increasingly <i>powerful</i> .
From just this explanation, one can see that, whether enlightenment is fast or not, depends primarily on the level of mind.
If the mind is stronger, more powerful and courageous, has a wider perspective, then such a person achieves enlightenment much quicker. This is why the Mantra path is so much quicker.
Therefore, the speed [of achievement] does not come from outside, rather, it comes from the level of the person's mind.
Within the Mantrayana, there are four levels of tantra. The three lower classes of tantra do explain about achieving enlightenment in one life and in one body. However, this necessitates the practice and the achievement of immortality.
Due to that, one is able to extend one's lifespan for a long time. Within that long life, one achieves enlightenment. This is what is taught in the three lower tantras.
In the Highest Yoga Tantra, it is taught that enlightenment is achieved in one lifetime and in one body. But this refers to the potential to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime and in one body in this degenerate age. It is more profound and quicker.
Again, the difference in the speed in achieving enlightenment is due to the level of the minds of the practitioners. The more developed and advanced one's mind is, the quicker is the result.
One should understand that, there are different levels of refuge: the refuge of the persons of small, middling and great capacities. Within great capacity, there is also the refuge of the practitioners of the Mantrayana.
Such different levels of refuge are primarily due to the difference in the levels of the minds of the persons who go for refuge.
Another thing to note is the importance of the attitude of renunciation, the determination to be free, the mind of definite emergence. It is needed for the refuge of the persons of middling and great capacities, including even the mantra practitioner.
Although the attitude of renunciation is needed for these three levels of refuge, the attitude, strength and quality also differ.
If one understands these different levels of refuge, then whatever one does, right from the very beginning, one knows what one stands for and where one will be proceeding towards. One also knows whether one has or does not have refuge in the first place. From here, one knows that, to arrive at a particular result, what sort of causes one needs.
Whatever practices one does, especially prayers and rituals, all of these always start with refuge. Hence, this is a reminder to keep this mind, every time one goes for refuge, one must bring forth the reasons for doing so.
If one is asked: "What is the refuge of a person of small, middling and great capacities, sometimes one would not be able to answer immediately. Hence, one must ensure that one can provide an answer if asked.

Title of the text: *The Wheel-Weapon That Strikes at the Enemy's Vital Spot*

In the ordinary sense of the word <i>enemy</i> , it would be the external enemy, the one who causes harm to oneself. If one were to annihilate every trace of such an enemy, one would employ a powerfully enough weapon to do so.
In this title, the enemy is one's own self-cherishing attitude. It is said that such an enemy has been causing one all the problems and sufferings in the past, is causing one all the problems and sufferings now, and it will cause one all the problems and sufferings in the future. Hence, right from the onset, one has to carefully and correctly identify/ delineate one's enemy.
All the succeeding verses that comprise this text are like the wheel-of-sharp-weapons that are used to annihilate one's self-cherishing attitude.
In the case of an ordinary professional skill in the world, such as being skilled in repairing machinery, someone who knows very well how a particular machine works, then when it starts to give problem, due to his expertise and knowledge, such a person is able to very quickly pin-point the exact problem and remedy it immediately.
Likewise, all the verses that comprise this text serve to quickly and correctly identify how one's self-cherishing attitude is the source of problems and has absolutely no benefit whatsoever. Through that, this will help one uproot it.
<i>This text is saying that, to defeat the enemy, one has to know one's enemy well and exactly how to defeat it. When one knows these two aspects well, one will be able to defeat one's enemy.</i>
Prostrations: <i>I bow down to the Great wrathful One, Yamantaka.</i> This involves tantra. Yamantaka refers to the antidote to Yama [the Lord of death]. There are the definitive and interpretive Yamantakas.

Definitive and interpretive guru-deity, inner and outer guru:

Definitive and interpretive guru-deity in tantra:
<i>The definitive Yamantaka is the non-dual bliss and emptiness. Such a non-duality takes on the aspect of a peaceful or wrathful deity. The aspect itself, whether it is peaceful or wrathful deity, is the interpretive Yamantaka.</i>
Definitive and interpretive guru in sutra:
There is a similar explanation in sutra: there is the inner virtuous friend/ inner guru and the outer virtuous friend/ outer guru.
<i>The inner guru/ virtuous friend is one's own positive mental qualities like a good heart and other virtuous minds. The outer guru/ virtuous friend is the person who shows one the way to achieve these inner qualities.</i>
Following such lines of thoughts, then there can be inner refuge and outer refuge:
<i>The inner refuge/ protection is one's own virtuous thoughts/ states of mind. The outer refuge/ protection are [the Three Jewels, embodied in one's outer guru].</i>
Yamantaka displays itself in a wrathful aspect. The wrath of such an aspect is continuously directed at the self-cherishing attitudes in the continua of all sentient beings.
If one were asked: "Why are there Buddhas in such frightening and wrathful aspects?" The only answer must be this: "Their wrath is directed at the afflictions, particularly, the self-cherishing attitudes in the continua of all sentient beings."
The wrathful One: This can refer to the ordinary bodhisattvas, those who are wrathful to the self-cherishing attitude.
The Great wrathful One: This can refer to the bodhisattva superiors.
The Final ultimate wrathful One: This can only exist on Buddha ground.
In this text, the final, ultimate and great wrathful one is Yamantaka, in both the interpretive and definitive sense. It is to such a Yamantaka that one pays homage to.

Student: When one is able to attain enlightenment in one life time in one body during the degenerate age, does it refer to someone who starts from [nothing], or must it be for someone who already possesses tremendous imprints from past lives?

Khenrinpoche: Put that question aside, first think about this:

From the day one meets one's own virtuous friend onwards, if one practices exactly what he advises in each and everything, do you think you can achieve enlightenment or perceive emptiness directly in that life?

If you say yes, that means in this life, you can definitely [at least] achieve the path of seeing, isn't it?

From the perspective of Highest Yoga Tantra, if you are [practicing] exactly, you definitely can achieve the illusory body in this life, isn't it?

If you say that you can achieve the illusory body, then it is absolutely definite that you will achieve enlightenment in that life!

Student: Even for me to meet the guru, to have that ability and determination to practice exactly according to his advice, that does not come from this lifetime. My connection with my guru does not come from this life time alone. Hence, the ability to achieve enlightenment does not happen in a single lifetime.

Khenrinpoche: The question to you is, do you think that you can achieve enlightenment in one life?

Student: Yes. **Khenrinpoche:** If you say, then that's it! **Student:** But it's not one lifetime! **Khenrinpoche:** That means you have so much good karma in the past isn't it? **Student:** Yes. **Khenrinpoche:** That means you discover that you are like Milarepa, isn't it? So, you are no different from Milarepa! **Student:** When it is said that one can achieve enlightenment in one lifetime, it gives the idea that, if one has no imprints, [this cannot be achieved].

Khenrinpoche: My point here is that, if you practice, you can achieve enlightenment, if you achieve enlightenment, you achieve it in this lifetime, right? The question is that, if you do practice, you can achieve it, isn't it? **Student:** Yes, I can.

Khenrinpoche: It follows that you cannot. This is because, you asserted that, you have worked hard in all your past lives, so it is not this lifetime. So you are not going to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime! So, it's the same as Milarepa.

Student: Yes, not achieving enlightenment in one lifetime. In that sense, there isn't achievement of enlightenment in one lifetime. **Khenrinpoche:** But you have already accepted that you can!

Khenrinpoche: Of course, to practice the path, one must first have some level of intelligence and wisdom, the necessary basis. Without this, there is no way one can achieve the realizations. But having that or lacking that is a result of what one has accumulated or not accumulate in the past. The human life of eight freedoms and ten endowments, which one possesses, is a necessary result of much hard work in the past. To achieve such a life, the foundation is pure ethical discipline, complimented by the perfections of the practices of generosity and so forth, connecting such practices to the result with stainless prayers. Hence, to possess such a life that one has, one must have accumulated a tremendous amount of merit. Since one has worked very hard in the past, that means one is no different from Milarepa! We are all the same as Milarepa.

Therefore, you have everything that Milarepa had. You have wisdom, a human body, you have the external condition of a virtuous friend... **Khenrinpoche:** Maybe you haven't met Marpa! Maybe that is what is missing!

Khenrinpoche: So, you have [all the conditions gathered] to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime! Hence, there is no reason to ask such a question in the first place. If you practice, you can definitely realize emptiness directly in this life, you can definitely generate bodhicitta, traverse the generation stage and completion stage of Highest Yoga Tantra and then achieve unification.

Khenrinpoche: What is missing? **Student:** Effort. **Khenrinpoche:** Can you make it? Too tired?

Khenrinpoche: If the practices are done, if you joyously persevere, there is nothing that can stop the achievement of enlightenment.

Looking at the different levels of refuge, if there is nothing to stop one from developing the mind that is unable to bear the sufferings of all sentient beings, one then wants to achieve enlightenment quickly, with that, one enters the tantric path, then there is nothing to stop the achievement of enlightenment.

Khenrinpoche: Therefore, you need to have that *determination*. With that determination, there is nothing that is blocking the attainment.

Khenrinpoche: If you see the point, where the essence lies, then defeating the inner enemy is much easier than defeating the outer enemy. That is if you know where the essence lies and exactly what to do next.

Khenrinpoche: Hence, you don't need to worry about what Milarepa did in the past, just as you don't have to worry about what you did in the past as well. The point here is that, in this life, [when you have all the conducive] conditions gathered, then there is essentially nothing to stop the attainment of enlightenment.

Khenrinpoche: If you were asked: "If you work hard, will you be able to develop calm abiding or bodhicitta?" There is really nothing else to say except *yes*. So, you must understand the qualifier: *if you work hard*, then you have to answer *yes*. There is no valid reason to say: "I will not be able to achieve it." Therefore, if one were asked: "Is enlightenment possible in one lifetime in one body?" The answer has to be *yes*.

Khenrinpoche: What if this time frame is shortened to one day? Can enlightenment be achieved in one day? I think you get my point!

With the presence of the eight freedoms and the ten endowments that characterize one's life, if one works at it correctly, then the answer has to be *yes*, it can be achieved. There is no need to talk about how hard you have worked in the past to accumulate merit to be where you are now.

We all have the fortune to have access to the Dharma teachings, the freedom and opportunities to listen to the teachings and learn the Dharma. This is the ripening result of the hard work one has accumulated in past lives, one is now experiencing the fruit of the ripening of one's merits.

Even if we want to compare ourselves with Milarepa, whatever we have now was what he had. He was human, the conditions were there, he [achieved enlightenment] only because he worked hard. If we work hard, then there is no real valid reason to say we will not achieve it as well.

All of us are still here, stuck [in samsara] and not [achieving any results], because we always think that people like Milarepa were better than us, that he [accumulated vast merits] in his previous lives.

Verses 1 to 6 – General explanation:**Verses 1 and 2:**

<p>1 <i>When the peacocks roam the jungle of virulent poison, the flocks take no delight in gardens of medicinal plants, no matter how beautiful they may be, for peacocks thrive on the essence of virulent poison.</i></p> <p>2 <i>Similarly, when the heroes roam the jungle of cyclic existence, they do not become attached to the garden of happiness and prosperity, no matter how beautiful it may be, for heroes thrive in the jungle of suffering.</i></p>
<p>It is said that peacocks are not interested in the usual enjoyments like fruits, beautiful flowers and so forth one finds in a beautiful garden. Rather, they take delight in, seek out poisonous plants, extract them and thrive on them. When they ingest such poisons, these in fact help their bodies become more [magnificent].</p>
<p>The point is, peacocks are able to thrive on poisons because, they can <i>use the poisons as conditions for them to become more attractive</i>. Since they know how to do it, hence, they happily and voluntarily ingest poisons.</p>
<p>The heroes are those who work for the welfare and happiness of sentient beings. <i>Heroes</i> here refer to the bodhisattvas.</p>
<p>The bodhisattva <i>heroes roam the jungle of cyclic existence</i>, the jungle is an analogy for the three poisons of ignorance, anger and attachment. It is very dark in the [dense] jungle, likewise, the jungle of cyclic existence is just enveloped by the darkness of the three poisons.</p>
<p>When the bodhisattvas roam the jungle of cyclic existence, no matter how wonderful, beautiful and attractive samsaric perfections may appear, whether it is good reputation, being praised, having material gains and so forth, these bodhisattvas are never attached to them.</p>
<p>This is because, they fully know the faults and disadvantages of cyclic existence, what suffering is and how it arises.</p>
<p>Hence, like peacocks who are not interested in beautiful gardens, the bodhisattvas are not interested in the garden of happiness and prosperity of cyclic existence.</p>
<p>The bodhisattvas abide in cyclic existence, simultaneously utilizing the difficulties and sufferings found in it to increase their practice of their bodhisattva deeds, just like the peacocks who are able to utilize and thrive on the essence of poisons.</p>
<p>The bodhisattvas voluntarily accept the sufferings and difficulties they face while abiding in the samsaric abode. They are able to do so because they know to use such difficulties and sufferings to enhance their practice of the bodhisattva deeds, just as peacocks know how to utilize and thrive on poisons to enhance their appearances.</p>

Verses 3 and 4:

<p>3 <i>Therefore, it is due to cowardice that persons avidly pursue their own happiness and so come to suffer; and it is due to heroism that bodhisattvas, willingly taking the suffering of others onto themselves, are always happy.</i></p>
<p>If one does not voluntarily accept the sufferings of samsara but follows the self-cherishing attitude instead, becoming negative with some small difficulty and so easily excited by a small samsaric happiness, then one will face many problems.</p>
<p>When ordinary persons follow their self-cherishing attitudes, out of that becoming attached to their own happiness and seeking out just for the happiness of this life alone, this will bring about suffering for themselves in this and all future lives.</p>
<p>Whereas the bodhisattva heroes, who willingly/ voluntarily accept and and take on the sufferings onto themselves and cherish others, will be the ones who will be happy in this and all of their future lives.</p>
<p>4 <i>Now here, desire is like a jungle of virulent poison: the hero, like the peacock, masters it; the coward, like the crow, perishes.</i></p>
<p>This refers to the practices of a person of great capacity. He utilizes difficult and challenging situations and transforms them into the path to enlightenment. He is also able to utilize some of the afflictions as a beneficial aid for his practice.</p>
<p>However, the teachings state very clearly that, before one is even qualified to start training in such practices, one must have thoroughly trained one's mind in the practices of a person of small and middling capacities. This is an absolute must.</p>
<p>In the <i>Perfection Vehicle, the Mahayana Paramitayana</i>, the bodhisattva superiors are allowed to use some afflictions <i>as an aid</i> to benefit sentient beings.</p>
<p>In <i>Mahayana Tantra</i>, above this, such practitioners can even take the afflictions <i>as the path</i> to enlightenment.</p>
<p>Here <i>desire</i> refers to the longing, clinging sensual desire, which is specifically mentioned. In the Mahayana Tantra, afflictions such as attachment/ desire, can be taken as the path.</p>

How desire arises very easily and is difficult to know what it really is:

Although the mind of desire itself is something that can arise so easily in everyone's mind, but it is very difficult even to be able to recognize and notice its arising, that there is actually desire manifesting strongly in one's mind.
One can get attached to just about anything, even if it is something insignificant, like [being attached to] a cup of tea. There can be so many types of attachment grasping at its object, its taste, fragrance, appearance and so forth.
Hence, one can get attached to almost anything, the object of attachment can be towards person or an inanimate object.
Whatever the objects of attachment may be, the point is that, the mind of attachment arises so easily.
In the example of being attached to a cup of tea, the tea itself does possess the five sense objects within it, the objects of form, sound, smell, taste and tactility. One can be attached to its taste, appearance, fragrance and touch, its softness etc.
<i>Khenrinpoche:</i> What about its sound? Anybody attached to <i>teh-tarik</i> ? Perhaps one is not really attached to the sound when they 'pull' the tea. Last time when I went for the Tibet trip, when I was in [Chengdu], [there was a shop that] sells twenty, thirty different types of tea. They would teach you how to drink each one, by making different noise from your mouth.
They would say: "You must drink this tea [by making] this kind of sound so that you can [extract] its taste!. It is interesting how they sell the tea that way.."
Desire/ attachment arises very easily, and it is very difficult to really know what desire is. Here, it is likened to poison. Perhaps there are some kinds of poisons that are easily produced. Desire here is likened to a jungle of virulent poison in that:
<i>Desire arises easily, strongly and in many forms.</i>
The heroes are like the peacocks who can master poisons. It is only the bodhisattvas, within them, mainly the bodhisattva superiors, that are the ones who can master and utilize attachment/ desire.
From the perspective of Mahayana tantra, the great heroes are the ones who can utilize attachment as the path. From the perspective Mahayana sutra, the bodhisattva superiors are the ones who can use attachment as an aid to benefit others.
It is only the great bodhisattva heroes, who have <i>completely forsaken themselves</i> and who are <i>only immersed in cherishing others</i> , who can use attachment as an aid to benefit sentient beings.
Those who are merely concerned about their own welfare, who have not forsaken themselves and who do not cherish others completely, if they try to use attachment like the bodhisattvas, they will sever the very life of their own liberation from samsara, not only this, they will also fall into the lower realms.
Ordinary people who want to use desire [in such manners] are like crows, who will die if they ingested poisons. Hence, they are unlike the peacocks, who are able to thrive on poisons, which make them more splendid.

Verses 5 and 6:

<i>5 How can persons concerned only with their own desires master this poison? If they involve themselves in the other afflictions as well, it will cost them their chance for emancipation, just like the crow.</i>
<i>6 Thus the bodhisattva roams like the peacock in the forest of cyclic existence, converting the afflictions, which are like a jungle of virulent poisons, into an elixir. Willingly embracing the afflictions, the hero shall conquer the poison.</i>
The great beings <i>Mahasattvas</i> are like the peacocks, for they are able to engage beings in samsara, at the same time utilizing afflictions like desire as an aid for their path to enlightenment, or utilizing the afflictions as a path itself.
When one is experiencing samsaric perfections, enjoyments like wealth, possessions, dwellings and so forth, one is immediately attached. This is one's usual reaction.
But no matter how wonderful the samsaric perfections may be, the great bodhisattvas are not attached. Even if they become attached to such perfections, because of who they are, they are able to transform and utilize all such opportunities as the means to benefit sentient beings and achieve enlightenment.
They have the attitude that think: "I must achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, therefore, I am going to utilize these things." Hence, they are able to transform their enjoyments into conditions for enlightenment. Therefore, these great beings willingly embrace the afflictions and conquer the afflictions.

Before trying to do anything Mahayana, why it is absolutely necessary to train in the lesser paths:

One needs to know why it is an absolute necessity to train one's mind in the practices of the persons of small and middling capacities prior to training in the practices of the person of great capacity, before even trying to do anything Mahayana.
In the practices of a person of middling capacity, the central purpose is the focus on developing renunciation, the determination to be free. To generate this, one must thoroughly know the <i>Four Noble Truths</i> in detail.
This starts with true suffering and true origins. Such a person must know in detail, fully and comprehensively, what exactly true suffering and true origins are. When one says one wishes to renounce, essentially, one needs to give up true origins.

It is only on the basis of such certain knowledge, that one develops the wish to distance oneself from and abandon them altogether. It is only then would one develop a wish for the peace of nirvana, which is a pacification of these two truths.
Renunciation, the determination to be free, is essentially the mind that is determined to be free from true sufferings and true origins and achieve a peace that is a pacification of these two. Such a mind is very much emphasized in the teachings. Hence, one needs a very strong renunciation, before one can go on to do any other practices.
It is mentioned in the <i>Stages of the path to enlightenment</i> that, one's attitude of renunciation should be even stronger than someone who wants to escape from a burning house, or a prisoner who just wants to escape from prison day and night. Until one develops such a strong renunciation, one needs to cultivate such a mind repeatedly.
One must first be disgusted with true origins and true sufferings. Such a disgust must be very strong. One just do not want to have anything to do with true sufferings and true origins. This is because, if there is no strong disgust for these two truths, then one would not have any interest to be free from them in the first place.
Just like when one is trapped in a burning house or in a prison cell, if one has no disgust for being in the middle of these, then it is impossible for one to ever develop the wish to be free from it.
If one does not have a good recognition and understanding of true sufferings and true origins, and if one's disgust and dislikes for them are mere words or very weak, then one's wish to be liberated from them will also be mere words or very weak. If that is the case, then one's 'practice' to achieve liberation from samsara will only be mere words as well.
If one does not even have the real wish and effort to free oneself from true sufferings and true origins, then how is it possible for one to develop real compassion for others who are 'suffering' in samsara?
If there is no real renunciation, then there is no [mental thoughts] whatsoever for genuine compassion, especially great compassion. If there is no genuine great compassion, then it is impossible to ever develop the uncontrived bodhicitta.
From this, one can see why it is absolutely necessary to initially train the mind in the practices of the persons of middling capacity before even trying to do any Mahayana practice.
This is because, if the mind is not well trained in the practices of a person of middling capacity, without any renunciation, then there is no way one can possess genuine compassion, especially great compassion.
Without great compassion, there is no hope whatsoever of developing the uncontrived bodhicitta. Without such a mind, one will not even enter into the ranks of the Mahayana. From this, one can see that it is absolutely necessary to train and develop one's mind in the practices of the person of middling capacity and generate the mind of renunciation.

How bodhisattvas have even greater renunciation than the Hearers and Solitary Realizers:

One must understand that, bodhisattvas do not like samsara at all. Their disenchantment with cyclic existence and wish to be free from it are so much greater than the disenchantment and yearning in the minds of the Hearers and Solitary Realizers.
<i>Lama Tsongkhapa's Great Treatise of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment states a qualm <small>LRCM Vol. 1, page 328</small>. Although it is appropriate in the Hinayana to cultivate disenchantment with cyclic existence, it is inappropriate for bodhisattvas, for, if bodhisattvas were to cultivate intense disgust and disenchantment with cyclic existence, they would be like the sravakas and fall into an extreme of peace, having become displeased with their environment in cyclic existence.</i>
The qualm is this: Bodhisattvas do not generate disenchantment for cyclic existence. If they meditate on renunciation and generate disenchantment for samsara, they will be like the Hearers and Solitary Realizers, falling into the extreme of peace.
This is because, if they generate disenchantment with cyclic existence, then they will not take rebirth in cyclic existence to benefit sentient beings. Since this becomes an obstacle for bodhisattvas, then they should not meditate on renunciation and should not generate disenchantment.

How bodhisattvas are afraid and disenchanted with taking rebirths in samsara due to karma and afflictions:

Reply: It is not that the bodhisattvas do not have renunciation for <i>rebirth in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions</i> , in fact, they have fear of taking rebirth under such circumstances. Hence, they are disgusted with and renounce that.
But the bodhisattvas, primarily the bodhisattva superiors, do not take rebirth in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions, but do so willingly, making a choice out of compassion and take rebirth due to the powers of their prayers and compassion.
They are completely disenchanted with taking rebirth in samsara due to karma and afflictions, this is for certain, as doing so is definitely suffering. One would not be of any benefit to others when one is suffering and in need of help. One has not even achieved one's own goal. If one has not done that, how would one be of any benefit to others?
However, they still take rebirth in it, having control and power, doing so due to their prayers and compassion. Bodhisattvas understand that, a rebirth in samsara due to karma and afflictions is an impediment to helping others.
This is because, if one is under the control of karma and afflictions and takes rebirth due to that, one cannot even take care of oneself, then how can one do anything effective for others? Hence, the bodhisattvas are afraid of and disenchanted with taking rebirths in samsara due to karma and afflictions.

How bodhisattva superiors utilize afflictions like desire as an aid to benefit others:

Bodhisattva superiors who are of the definite lineage* do not deliberately focus on abandoning afflictions like desire as his main object of abandonment. In sutra, it is mentioned that those who have generated bodhicitta, who are absorbed in engaging to benefit sentient beings do not abandon all the afflictions. This is a scriptural citation from Buddha.

[From Śāstra,] *Arya Vimutisena's* commentary on the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Twenty Thousand Verses [commentary on the Abhisamayalankara, Skt. abhisamayālaṅkārikāvārttika]*, mentioned that the bodhisattva's main object of abandonment is the apprehension of true existence.

This is because, such bodhisattvas are primarily interested in benefiting sentient beings. Since sentient beings are in samsara, hence, these bodhisattvas do not [consider] attachment of the three realms as their main object of abandonment.

Such bodhisattvas do not focus so much on abandoning the attachment of the desire and form realms. This is because, such forms of attachment can be utilized by such great beings to benefit others.

In the teachings, it is said that such beings can utilize attachment/ desire to take rebirths as a universal monarch/ wheel-turning king, who has control over a world system and father many children to benefit sentient beings.

If some medicinal substances were added to some poison, this can reduce its poisonous effects such that, even if it is ingested, not only does it not become fatal, [the concoction] is even beneficial. Likewise, the desire in the continuum of a bodhisattva is likened to this.

Khenrinpoche: Most of the medicine has some poisonous plants added to it. If you take the poison directly, it does not cure your sickness, but if you mix it with some medicinal plants, then the poison does not become harmful, but can even cure you.

The arhats have abandoned the afflictions, hence they can never be harmed by afflictions. For many bodhisattva superiors, even though they may still have afflictions in their minds, but such afflictions do not harm them as well.

It is as if they do not have the afflictions. Since they cannot be harmed by the afflictions, hence they are able to use some of the afflictions like desire as an aid to benefit sentient beings.

Ordinary beings, those who take rebirth in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions, are unable to do so. Particularly, those who still have self-cherishing, focusing only on their welfare, will never be able to use afflictions to benefit others.

As long as one has not abandoned self-cherishing and still possesses that in one's mind, one is never in the position to use afflictions as an aid to benefit sentient beings. As long as there is self-cherishing, the afflictions can harm one. This is why, Hearers and Solitary Realizers' main object of abandonment is to destroy the afflictions.

Whereas, not only have bodhisattvas abandoned self-cherishing, they also regard all afflictions as faults. However, some of them can use some afflictions like desire as an aid to benefit sentient beings. Since they lack self-cherishing, the potential harm that they may receive from their own afflictions is much lower.

Particularly, even though some bodhisattva superiors still have not abandoned the afflictions, but they can never be harmed by them. Hence, one finds in the teachings that say, bodhisattva superiors happily, willingly choose to enter samsara to accomplish the welfare of others. Therefore, they are said to not fear samsara.

There can be different ways where someone takes rebirth in samsara, this all depends on who that person is:

1) Ordinary beings do so due to the power of karma and afflictions.

2) Bodhisattva superiors do so due to the powers of prayers and compassion.

3) Ordinary bodhisattvas in the pure lands take rebirth in samsara also due to the power of their prayers.

4) Bodhisattvas abiding on the eighth, ninth and tenth pure grounds take rebirth in samsara due to the levels of predisposition of ignorance and uncontaminated karma.

* A person (1) who will attain Buddhahood without losing Bodhicitta and entering the Hinayana path and (2) who either has awakened Mahayana [lineage] or will awaken Mahayana [lineage] in his current lifetime. INSTITUTE FOR BUDDHIST DIALECTICAL STUDIES

Student: How is fear or disgust an affliction in one context but not in another?

Khenrinpoche: One must understand what this fear of having to take rebirth in samsara due to karma and afflictions is all about. Such a fear is possessed by the Bodhisattvas, Hearers and Solitary Realizers. They all need such fears. Statements like, *Bodhisattvas are not afraid of taking rebirth in cyclic existence*, means that, they take rebirth in cyclic existence motivated by compassion, doing so willingly by choice due to the powers of their prayers. This does not mean that, the bodhisattvas are not afraid of taking rebirth in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions, in fact, all bodhisattvas are afraid of taking rebirth in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions.

It is not that, one goes around deliberately frightening oneself [about the fears of samsara], that is not the point. Of course, one does cultivate the fears of the sufferings of lower realms and samsara. But it is not the practice merely to develop fear, which has to be abandoned eventually. Then the point is, is there a point in cultivating such fears? It is not that one deliberately focuses on cultivating fear [alone]. You must know why you are afraid.

How bodhisattvas use afflictions to benefit others:

<p>6 Thus the bodhisattva roams like the peacock in the forest of cyclic existence, converting the afflictions, which are like a jungle of virulent poisons, into an elixir. Willingly embracing the afflictions, the hero shall conquer the poison.</p>
<p>Bodhisattva superiors do not primarily focus on abandoning the afflictions like desire. Nevertheless, they do regard all afflictions as faults and mistakes. They can utilize desire as an aid to benefit sentient beings.</p>
<p>One must understand that, there are some bodhisattva superiors who still have to take rebirth in cyclic existence. But they do so willingly and happily due to the power of their prayers. They do not do so due to the force of karma and afflictions.</p>
<p>Hence, one must not misunderstand that they are happy to take rebirth in cyclic existence due to liking it nor due to the force of karma and afflictions. In fact, bodhisattvas have great disenchantment with cyclic existence. The renunciation possessed by the bodhisattvas are said to be much stronger than those possessed by the Hinayanists. ¹ [¹ See page 37]</p>
<p>Hence, the statement that <i>bodhisattvas are happy to take rebirth in cyclic existence</i> ² means that, they do so <i>willingly due to the power of their prayers to benefit sentient beings</i>. This is how one must understand such statements. [² See page 37]</p>

The criteria for using afflictions and why these do not harm the bodhisattvas who use them:

<p>Bodhisattva superiors see and know fully all the faults of desire and attachment. Nevertheless, they are beings who are <i>only</i> focused on helping others. That is their only goal and interest, to benefit others. Hence, the desires and attachments of the bodhisattva superiors do not harm them. In fact, they able to utilize these as an aid to benefit sentient beings.</p>
<p>In the Hinayana, there are no exception in abandoning the ten nonvirtues. In fact, the focus is in abandoning them. Hence, there is no permission whatsoever to engage the nonvirtue of body and speech.</p>
<p>But it is clearly stated in the Mahayana teachings that, the Buddha did make certain exceptions and gave permissions with regards to the three nonvirtues of body and the four nonvirtues of speech. Essentially, there are times and situations in which permissions are given to certain individuals to [perform] these seven nonvirtues.</p>
<p>Perhaps in this context, there are no exceptions given to the three nonvirtues of the mind, this seems to be stated in some text.</p>
<p>For as long as one is still in possession of the self-cherishing attitude, there are no exceptions given to engage in the nonvirtues of body and speech. This is because, as long as there is self-cherishing, then such actions would even harm oneself, then how could such actions be beneficial to others?</p>
<p>But in the case of someone who has abandoned the self-cherishing attitude completely, whose focus is on benefiting others, if there are benefits, then there are exceptions made to engage in some of these physical and verbal nonvirtues.</p>
<p>Hence, it seems like the permission is granted on the basis of whether one has self-cherishing attitude or not.</p>
<p>In the teachings there is an account of how Buddha, in one of his past life, killed a person on board a ship. At that time, he saw that this person was about to kill all five hundred people on board that ship. This bodhisattva saw that, if this person were to commit murder, then he would have to born in the lower realms and suffer for a very long time.</p>
<p>Motivated by great compassion for him, this bodhisattva decided to kill him before he could commit murder. He thought to himself that, if he had had to bear the negative results of killing that person, then so be it. He would sacrifice himself.</p>
<p>Of course, this bodhisattva had no self-cherishing attitude. Hence, he killed that person completely out of concern for others.</p>
<p>It is said that, such an act of killing instead helped sped up his accumulation of merit. He was therefore liberated from samsara even more quickly than if he had not killed that person.</p>
<p>Therefore the point to understand is that, if one has completely abandoned all self-cherishing attitude, does not possess [even the smallest mindset], is only focused on benefiting others, then one has permission to [perform] some of the physical and verbal nonvirtues to benefit others.</p>
<p>For one who has not abandoned the self-cherishing attitude and still possesses them, then there is no exception whatsoever.</p>
<p>As the last line of this verse says: <i>Willingly embracing the afflictions, the hero shall conquer the poison</i>, these bodhisattva superiors are able to utilize objects of enjoyments, because it does not harm them.</p>
<p>In fact, by doing so, they are able to experience the partaking of such objects of enjoyment as an aid to benefit sentient beings and are not harmed by them. Hence they are able to complete the accumulation of merit.</p>
<p>[The reason] they are able to utilize the objects of enjoyment is because, they never come under the control and influence of desire. This is because, they are always aware of the faults of desire and attachment.</p>
<p>Since they see the faults of such minds, they are never controlled nor influenced by them. Hence, they are able to use such objects of enjoyment to benefit others and finish their accumulation of merit.</p>

Verse 7:

<p style="text-align: center;">7 The ego-clinging of the helpless wanderer in cyclic existence is the messenger of the devil. Distance yourself from the savor of selfishness and hedonism, and willingly embrace hardship for the sake of others.</p>
<p><i>The ego-clinging of the helpless wanderer in cyclic existence:</i> In this context, that which is causing one to circle in cyclic existence is one's self-cherishing attitude.</p>
<p>In general, the apprehension of the self is the root of circling in cyclic existence. Even the Hearers and Solitary Realizers would have to abandon such a mind. But in this context, the <i>ego-clinging</i> refers to one's self-cherishing attitude.</p>
<p><i>Is the messenger of the devil:</i> The <i>devil</i> here, as explained in the commentary, is the self-cherishing attitude. The <i>messenger</i> is the apprehension of the self.</p>
<p><i>Distance yourself from the savor of selfishness and hedonism:</i> Hence, one should distance oneself from one's self-cherishing attitude and one's self-grasping conception. These make one seeks out happiness in cyclic existence. The point is, one should not come under the control of these two minds.</p>
<p><i>And willingly embrace hardship for the sake of others:</i> One should only work for the welfare of others, particularly to voluntarily embrace the hardships that come along when one works for others.</p>

The disadvantages of following one's self-cherishing attitude, the source of all of one's problems:

<p>The essential point is to understand the disadvantages of following one's self-cherishing attitude, what one stands to lose if one were to follow it. For example, it is stated in the <i>Seven Point Mind Training</i> teaching, starting with the statement: Put all the blame onto one. <i>One</i> here is essentially the self-cherishing attitude.</p>
<p>1) The teachings say that, if one were to think and analyze carefully, one will see that, it is one's self-cherishing attitude that is behind all the sufferings one has experienced since beginningless time up to the present.</p>
<p>One regards cherishing others as the enemy, something not beneficial. One regards the selfishness of one's self-cherishing as like one's loved ones.</p>
<p>Since beginningless lifetimes, one has regarded sentient beings, who are the actual source of one's happiness, as the enemy. One has regarded one's self-cherishing attitude, which is actually one's real enemy, as the most important, precious loved one.</p>
<p>2) If one thinks about it, in the context of this life, it is quite clear that, one's problems and unhappiness indeed do come from one's self-cherishing attitude. For example, if someone were to criticize one, saying something unpleasant to one, when one hears it, one would definitely not like it, become very disturbed and suffer.</p>
<p>But it is clear that, when one hears such criticisms and gets disturbed in the first place, this is all due to one's self-cherishing.</p>
<p>3) Whether it is some sicknesses, pains or even spirit harms, if one were to analyze, the root of all such undesirable experiences is one's own self-cherishing.</p>
<p>4) It is very clear that, even as a Buddhist, whatever vows and commitments one takes on, whether it is the vow of a lay person or the bodhisattva vow and so forth, the reason one is unable to keep them properly, that one's actions do not become Dharma, is again all due to one's self-cherishing.</p>
<p>5) Self-cherishing leads to all the problems in this life. If one analyzes and thinks carefully, beyond this life, the reason why one goes to the lower realms, or even if one does not go there, the reason why one is still in samsara, experiencing all the different problems and difficulties, all of these originates from one's own selfishness.</p>
<p>6) All the problems one experiences as a human being, like disharmony between people, fighting, quarrels, disagreements and so forth, if one thinks about it, all of these comes back to selfishness.</p>
<p>7) It is very clear that, due to one's self-cherishing attitude, one regards oneself as more important than others, in fact, one regards oneself as the most important of all amongst all the people. Due to that, one works so hard for the most important person [in samsara], oneself. With such an attitude, one strives in making money and so forth for this most important person.</p>
<p>8) One thinks: "I want this and that, I want to be famous, I want to have good reputation..." To achieve this, one does everything, even cheat, compete negatively with others, disregards others, looking down on them and so forth. That which is responsible for all of these is [none other than] one's own self-cherishing attitude.</p>
<p>9) Sometimes, one can be jealous of others who are materially more well-off than one, they have more money and other good things of life. One becomes envious and jealous. This again is due to one's self-cherishing attitude.</p>
<p>10) If one's self-cherishing is very strong, then all it takes is for someone to point out one's little fault, saying something unpleasant. Even though this may be insignificant, but because one's self-cherishing is very strong, one gets very upset.</p>
<p>11) From one's own experience, it is obviously evident and clear that, the stronger one's ego and selfishness, the more difficult it is for one to get along with others. It does not matter what organization, society, community, with friends, relatives or family, due to holding oneself as the most important person, then all it takes is some insignificant but unpleasant event to occur, then everyone appears as enemies. One will find faults in them and hence difficulties [getting along] with them.</p>

<p>12) It is very clear, that all the disharmony in relationships between parents and children, partners, friends, people in a community, or even between gurus and disciples, all the problems and unhappiness due to difficulties in relationship within such groups ultimately all come from self-cherishing.</p>
<p>13) In the sayings of the <i>Kadampa masters</i>, it is mentioned that, until one sees oneself as the enemy, seeing one's own self-cherishing as one's enemy, it does not matter who one has as one's guru, conventionally, it can be all the good teachers, they would not be able to benefit one.</p>
<p><i>Hence, the point is to recognize one's self-cherishing as the enemy. If one does so, then the possibility for positive change can exist.</i></p>
<p>As the <i>Seven Point Mind Training</i> says: <i>Put all the blame onto one.</i></p>
<p>Hence, one should put all the blame onto one's self-cherishing attitude. This is because, the teachings say that, one's self-cherishing attitude is responsible for all the problems one has in this life, it is that which sends one to the hells, hungry ghost and animal realms, it is that which causes all of one's problems in one's future lives.</p>
<p>This is what the teachings say, but one has to think about it, analyze and see for oneself whether this is true or not. <i>This is a very important step, one needs to think for oneself.</i></p>

The advantages of cherishing others:

<p>If one's self-cherishing attitude has all such faults and disadvantages, then cherishing others must result in the opposite.</p>
<p>1) Even in this life, if one has thoughts of benefiting and cherishing others, then one would have less problems and more happiness. Likewise, that must be the case as well for one's future lives, one would have less problems and more happiness.</p>
<p>2) A good rebirth in the future, as a human or a celestial being, would come from cherishing others. Likewise, the happiness of liberation and full enlightenment also come from cherishing others.</p>
<p>3) It is mentioned in the <i>Mind Training Teachings</i>, as well as in the <i>Stages of the Path to Enlightenment</i> that, one has to consider from all angles, the faults and disadvantages of self-cherishing. One has to consider from all angles, the profits, advantages and gains there are from cherishing others. These two reflections are critical, one must think deeply.</p>
<p>It is only on the basis of seeing the faults of self-cherishing and the benefits of cherishing others that, the practice of <i>Tonglen</i>, taking on the suffering of others and giving one's happiness to others, can make sense.</p>
<p>The remainder of this root text is essentially about this: taking on the suffering of others and giving one's happiness to others. This will not make any sense at all, if one has not [concluded], felt, agreed that self-cherishing is harmful and if one has not really felt and saw that, cherishing others is really so important.</p>
<p>The very first verse of the <i>Eight Verses of Thought Transformation</i> teaches how, by seeing that sentient beings are more precious than wish-fulfilling jewels, this would enable one to hold them as supreme.</p>
<p>4) <i>Lama Atisha</i> says that, one regards one's object of refuge, the Buddhas and meditational deities, as being very important and precious. However he says that, sentient beings can be more precious, or at least are equally precious. This is because, all of one's objects of refuge came from sentient beings.</p>
<p>5) The teachings point to one that, the reason one takes refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, making requests to the meditational deities, relying on one's gurus, are essentially for achieving enlightenment for sentient beings. If one can cherish others and take care of them, then the attainment of enlightenment will be granted to one.</p>
<p>6) The teachings say that, if one cherishes others, one will accomplish all the aims of this life and all the aims of future lives, every single [aim] can be achieved.</p>
<p>7) The teachings also state that, if one generates love and compassion for sentient beings, the merits [accumulated] will surpass the merits one gets from making normal offerings to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In fact, generating love and compassion for sentient beings is said to be a supreme offering.</p>
<p>Hence, the essence is this. One has to think repeatedly, until one ascertains and believes that one's self-cherishing is indeed the source of all of one's problems. Likewise, one has to think repeatedly until one is utterly convinced that, the mind that cherishes others is the main cause of all the success and happiness.</p>

Verse 8:

<p><i>8 May the suffering of all beings, who, like myself, are driven by their karma and their habituation to the afflictions, be heaped upon me, the hedonist.</i></p>
<p>Sentient beings circle in cyclic existence mainly due to their self-cherishing. Due to this, they accumulate karma, which make them circle in cyclic existence. They also [circle in it] due to their habituation and familiarity with their afflictions.</p>
<p>This verse says that, <i>May the suffering of all beings, who, like myself</i>, be taken upon oneself and be thrown at one's self-cherishing, making it powerless. The point is to destroy one's self-cherishing.</p>

Differentiating between oneself and one's self-cherishing attitude:

Here, one takes on the sufferings of all beings, direct it and throw it onto one's self-cherishing attitude.
There is a difference between oneself the person and one's afflictions. Hence, there is a distinction between oneself and one's self-cherishing.
Hence, the target is one's self-cherishing attitude. One is not aiming to destroy oneself, but one's self-cherishing attitude.
To even entertain the thought of taking on all the problems [of cyclic existence] and throwing it onto one's self-cherishing attitude, one must firstly be utterly convinced that, one's self-cherishing attitude is the problem.
When one has these two understandings, then, as the verses says, <i>May the suffering of all beings be heaped upon me</i> , this means may all these be directed and thrown at one's self-cherishing attitude.
One must understand the distinction between oneself and one's faults/ afflictions/ self-cherishing. Sometimes, one holds onto and regards these two as inseparably one. This is not the case, as one is not out to destroy oneself.
Rather, one is out to destroy one's self-cherishing. Otherwise, if one thinks one is inseparable from one's afflictions, that oneself and one's self-cherishing are the same, then one is going to meet with a lot of problems.
Since Tathagata Essence was taught, one knows that the nature of the mind is clear light and the defilements are adventitious, hence, one should be able to see the distinction between oneself and one's self-cherishing.
Since the mind is clear light, [this means that], the afflictions have never ever resided in the nature of one's mind, hence, one is not one's afflictions.
If one thinks about what the 'I' is, one does not impute 'I' in dependence upon the afflictions, rather, it is essentially imputed in dependence upon the mind's factor of luminosity and awareness.
If one were to investigate deeper, the 'I' is imputed in dependence upon the emptiness of true existence of one's mind.
With respect to the <i>Mahamudra, The Great Seal</i> , from the perspective of the sutra vehicle, the objective Mahamudra is none other than the emptiness of true existence of the mind. This is also the Mahamudra of the basis. The Mahamudra of the path [subjective Mahamudra] would be the mind that realizes the emptiness of true existence of the mind.
The resultant subjective Mahamudra is the resultant wisdom/ Dharmakaya, that realizes the emptiness of true existence of the mind. The resultant objective Mahamudra is the Nature Body of natural purity.

Verse 9:

<i>9 When I become enmeshed in selfishness, I will offer my own happiness to living beings so as to counteract it.</i>
It is quite impossible for bodhisattvas to be selfish, to have self-cherishing. If one allows for such a possibility, since bodhisattvas always think about and understand the faults of self-cherishing fully, then to counteract such selfishness, one should offer one's happiness to others. Essentially, this describes the practice of <i>Tonglen</i> .
Bodhisattvas take on all the sufferings of sentient beings into themselves to weaken and destroy their own self-cherishing attitudes, while giving their happiness and dedicate them to others.
<i>9 In the same way, should a companion be ungrateful to me, I will be content in knowing that this is in retribution for my own inconstancy.</i>
The situation mentioned in this verse is similar to that taught in the <i>Eight Verses of Thought Transformation</i> : When someone whom one has benefited returns harm to one, then the teachings say that, one should feel happy.
This is because, this is the result of one's own self-cherishing [in the past] now returning back to oneself. With such a recognition, one should feel happy, taking joy and satisfaction from experiencing the harm in return for one's help.
Usually, one feels good with some satisfaction when one sees one's enemy suffers, experiencing something bad.
[Similarly, as opposed to that], the one receiving the harm is one's own self-cherishing attitude. If one has already acknowledged and ascertained that one's self-cherishing attitude is indeed the root source of all of one's problems, then when one sees one's self-cherishing attitude being harmed, then one would be satisfied and happy.
When someone is ungrateful to one, despite having being helped by one, if one can ascertain and acknowledge that, being in such a situation now is the result of one's own doing due to one's own self-cherishing, then one should see this as a reminder to oneself, that in the future, one will never follow one's self-cherishing.
One needs to understand that, the harms and problems that one receives is a result of one's own self-cherishing.

Verse 10:

<i>10 When my body falls prey to [unbearable] sickness, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for injuring the bodies of living beings. From now on, I shall take all sickness upon myself.</i>
<i>When my body falls prey to terrible sickness:</i> When one experiences some physical pain or sickness, one has to remind oneself that, this is the result of one's karma of having harmed others physically, putting them in prison, captivity etc.
In the practice of Taking and Giving, if this happens to one, one then makes requests to the Buddhas and meditational deities for them to grant one blessings for one to take on the similar sufferings of others and experience it oneself. One takes on these sufferings, throw and direct it at the suffering one is already experiencing.
One must not forget the point behind such visualizations. As seen earlier, all of one's problems, including sicknesses, are the results of one's own self-cherishing attitude. One has to first see, acknowledge and accept that.
Once one sees this, then here in the practice of Taking and Giving, which is an exercise to develop courage to destroy one's self-cherishing, [one sees the point of] making requests to the Buddhas and deities to grant their blessings [for one] to take on all the problems, sufferings of others and experiencing it oneself. The whole point is to destroy one's self-cherishing.
In the context of <i>Tonglen</i> , Taking and Giving, here one visualizes all of one's happiness, virtues and all the positive things leaving one and dedicated to sentient beings as one breathes out, thinking that all of these are given in the form of white light.
As one breathes in, one [visualizes] breathing in all of their sufferings, problems as well their causes and so forth, in the form of black smoke. One then directs this to one's self-cherishing attitude.
This is related to the practice of <i>Exchanging Self and Others</i> .
If this is not possible, what one can think is that, whatever problems and sicknesses one is experiencing, is the result of one's negative karma. Hence, it is the Wheel-of-Sharp-Weapons of one's negative karma returning to haunt one.
By accepting that this is the result of one's own negative karma, then at least one can try to stay undisturbed and not so affected by one's problems.
When people get sick, many of them will say: "Why me? I am so careful with my health, I take so good care of my health, doing this and that, but then how come I still get sick?" The above statements are the answers.
If one has some faith of conviction in karma, when problems like getting sick occurs to one, one can see that it is the ripening effect of one's own negative karma. Then one's mind does not get disturbed.
Hence, at the minimum, if one has faith in karma, then this is the difference in being a real Buddhist. One can think: "This is my negative karma ripening. With this, I am purifying one more of my negativities."
One would at least not get so disturbed and remain calm about it. Otherwise, if one lacks faith in karma, then it does not matter if one calls oneself a Buddhist, one is no different [from others] and still becomes disturbed and upset.
Be it a sickness, suffering or problem, once it [ripens and] happens, there is nothing much one can do about it. It does not matter what one thinks, it will not go away as it has happened.
However, there is a huge difference in having a positive mindset in that, if one thinks that this is a ripening result of one's negative karma, then at least one would not get so disturbed or may not even be disturbed at all.
Hence, at least one does not give oneself more problems [above what one is having], so there is some peace.
Above this, if one can think, feel and do what this text is saying: "May I use this to experience all the sufferings of sentient beings, may it replace the sufferings of sentient beings," then there will be that much more happiness one will achieve.

Verse 11

<i>11 When my mind falls prey to suffering, it is surely the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for troubling the minds of others. From now on, I shall willingly take all suffering upon myself.</i>
When one's mind falls prey to suffering due to being disturbed by someone, when one feels [depressed], mentally uncomfortable or upset for no reason, one must think that, these are the ripening results of having disturbed the minds, for example, of one's gurus, parents or friends in the past.
Whatever it may be, one uses such experiences to take on the sufferings of others and taking it upon oneself to experience it.
There are many such verses here, all essentially meant for meditating on Taking and Giving. With each verse, one makes requests to one's guru-deity to take on others' sufferings and dedicate one's happiness to them.
While thinking about the meaning of the verse, with the visualization of Taking and Giving, one engages in the practice.

Verses 12, 13, 14 and 15:

<p><i>12 When I am tormented by extreme hunger and thirst, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for swindling, stealing, and acting miserly. From now on, I shall willingly take all hunger and thirst upon myself.</i></p>
<p><i>13 When I am powerless and suffer enslavement, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for despising my inferiors and enslaving them. From now on I shall make slaves of my body and my life for the sake of others.</i></p>
<p><i>14 When insulting remarks assault my ears, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for my verbal offenses of slander and so forth. From now on I shall condemn my own verbal faults.</i></p>
<p><i>15 When I am reborn into an impure land, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for always cultivating impure vision. From now on, I shall cultivate only pure vision.</i></p>
<p>These verses are rather straightforward and not difficult to understand. But the most important thing is to think repeatedly about the faults of self-cherishing, to see and accept from one's heart how it is the root source of all of one's problems.</p>
<p>Likewise, one has to reflect from all angles, the benefits of cherishing others, seeing how that is so.</p>
<p>All the verses here are teaching about specific sufferings and their specific causes of negative karma. One sees what these causes are and accepts them for what they are. If one does not want to experience them in the future, then one has to make a promise to oneself to refrain such actions again in the future. This is essentially what all such verses are about.</p>

Student: When a bodhisattva fathers many children to benefit sentient beings, if some of them turn out bad, then how would that be beneficial?

Khenrinpoche: If [they] can produce a thousand children, maybe ten would be fantastic!

The mother of brothers *Asanga* and *Vasubandhu* was a nun before she [conceives] them. She returned her vows to give birth to them.

When children do not turn out well, it is because their parents [produced] them out of self-cherishing. Perhaps for the bodhisattvas, those who do not have self-cherishing, having children would be a different situation in that, [they would not produce bad offsprings].

This is because, bodhisattvas have very big minds to benefit sentient beings. They can also make very powerful prayers. In a way, the conditions for them to produce children would be beneficial. This is because, they probably would have some control over the situation.

¹ *LRCM Vol 1, page 329:*

Since such wondering [in cyclic existence under the power of karma and afflictions] is the door to all problems, [which would include the problems of all other sentient beings,] bodhisattvas must be even more disenchanted with cyclic existence than Hinayana practitioners and must stop their own wondering caused by karma and the afflictions [first].

² *LRCM Vol 1, page 329:*

Hence, the Buddha says that not being disenchanted with cyclic existence means not being disenchanted with accomplishing the good of living beings in cyclic existence, as well as enjoying this activity.

How bodhisattva superiors take rebirth in cyclic existence due to the power of their prayers:

Student 1: [Bodhisattva superiors accumulate only uncontaminated karma, how does that correlate with their taking rebirths in cyclic existence for the sake of sentient beings?]

Khenrinpoche: The bodhisattva superiors mentioned in the text who voluntarily take rebirth in cyclic existence due to the force of their prayers can be *any* bodhisattva superiors, it is not necessarily only those on the pure grounds.

Even the bodhisattvas on the first ground take rebirths in cyclic existence intentionally to benefit sentient beings. But [as mentioned], their taking rebirths in cyclic existence are not due to karma and afflictions.

It is said that, bodhisattva superiors do not possess true suffering, that their bodies are not true suffering. Hence, they do not experience the sufferings as taught in the usual teachings about birth, aging sickness and death.

When someone becomes a bodhisattva superior, his body becomes a mental body. When he achieves the eighth ground, all his afflictions are abandoned. Prior to that, his afflictions have yet to be abandoned. It is not that he cannot abandon it, but he does not make a point to abandon his afflictions.

The principal object of abandonment of impure ground bodhisattvas and the causes of rebirths for bodhisattvas:

Khenrinpoche: Since the bodhisattva abandons his afflictions on the eighth ground. If one says that, the afflictions are the main object of abandonment from the first up to the achievement of the eighth ground, then what would be their principal object of abandonment?

Perhaps one can say that, the principal object of abandonment is the apprehension of true existence and the view of the transitory collection and not attachment and so forth. It is clear that, attachment/ desire is not the main object of abandonment for these bodhisattva superiors.

The bodhisattvas abandon the afflictions on the eighth ground. Those on the three pure grounds take rebirths due to uncontaminated karma and the levels of predisposition of ignorance.

From the first to the eighth ground, the bodhisattvas still need to depend on *coarse exertion [motivation]* to take rebirth. Coarse exertion is exhausted on the eighth ground, on the three pure grounds, the bodhisattvas still need to depend on subtle exertion to take rebirth. Such rebirths happen due to uncontaminated karma and the levels of predisposition of ignorance.

Ordinary bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path of accumulation and path of preparation take rebirth in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions.

There are also rebirths through the force of prayers: for example, bodhisattvas abiding in the pure lands take rebirth in cyclic existence due to the force of their prayers.

How bodhisattvas in the pure lands do not have any manifest karma and afflictions:

Khenrinpoche: It is said that, [the beings there] do not possess negativities in the pure lands. But do these bodhisattvas, including ordinary bodhisattvas in the pure lands, possess afflictions? **Student 2:** Yes. **Khenrinpoche:** If you say that they have afflictions, then this means that they would accumulate new projecting karma in the pure lands.

Student 2: No pervasion.

Khenrinpoche: Whether there is pervasion or no pervasion, can they take rebirth in cyclic existence? Are there bodhisattvas abiding in pure lands who take rebirths in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions? By saying no pervasion, you are essentially saying that there are such bodhisattvas who rebirths in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions. It is clearly stated in the teachings that, bodhisattvas abiding in pure lands take rebirths in cyclic existence due to the powers of their prayers and not due to the force of karma and afflictions. If they do take rebirths in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions, then why would they want to go to pure lands in the first place? This is because, being in pure land would be no different from someone who is not in pure land. This is because, someone who is not in pure land has no control. If bodhisattvas abiding in pure lands due to karma and afflictions, this is the same as saying that, they also have no control and freedoms whatsoever.

Refuting that bodhisattvas in the pure land attain enlightenment quicker than those in cyclic existence:

Student 3: Perhaps the point for them going there is to be enlightened quickly by receiving teachings from the Buddha directly. One becomes a Buddha in the pure land, then come back to help sentient beings as a Buddha. I am not sure whether a bodhisattva will come back to cyclic existence as a bodhisattva, but definitely as a Buddha later. If not, there is no benefit in going to the pure land.

Khenrinpoche: Going by what you say, isn't the path to enlightenment quicker than if you are abiding in cyclic existence? It takes longer to be enlightened in the pure land isn't it? Isn't it the case that, the bodhisattva will achieve enlightenment quicker by being in a samsaric world, rather than being in the pure land? There is stronger renunciation when you are abiding in a samsaric environment. Due to the force of such a stronger renunciation, the compassion generated is stronger.

Student 3: I don't think that is necessarily the case.

Khenrinpoche: There is more suffering here isn't it? **Student 3:** I think [the strength of compassion etc] would depend on the [individual] bodhisattva. Each has different path and inclination.

Khenrinpoche: Going by your thinking, then those who go to the pure lands are dull faculties.

Student 3: He is already a bodhisattva. This is about whether he is remaining in cyclic existence or choosing to go to the pure land. He has already renounced self-cherishing and cherishes others on the basis of recognition of the sufferings of others and recalling their kindnesses. I am not sure it is easier to practice here or in the pure land. It [should be] depending on his mind. He may decide: “As a practitioner, it is better if I go to the pure land quickly, meet Amitabha and [quickly] become enlightened. If not, then what's the purpose of pure land practice? Is a pure land practice only for practitioners of dull faculties? Because I am hearing that, only dull-facultied practitioners want to go into pure land practice.

Stating the proof that it is quicker to attain enlightenment in a samsaric environment:

Khenrinpoche: The main point is this, what you are saying is that, you achieve enlightenment quicker in the pure land. What I am saying is that, you will achieve enlightenment quicker in a samsaric environment. That is the difference in views. Which do you think is better? It does not matter if it is a bodhisattva or not, which person achieves enlightenment faster?

Student 3: I am not sure. **Khenrinpoche:** Since you say that, then going to pure land is faster, you are already sure about that.

Student 3: What then is the purpose of pure land practice?

Khenrinpoche: What was the original point?

Student 3: When the ordinary bodhisattvas come back to cyclic existence, they will still possess karma and afflictions.

Khenrinpoche: It is stated clearly that, there are no true sufferings in the pure lands. Perhaps one also has to say that they do not have true origins as well. If one says, that the inhabitants in the pure lands have true sufferings, then it follows that their bodies are necessarily true sufferings. If it is true suffering, then it is in the nature of suffering. If it is in the nature of suffering, then it follows that there is no difference between the bodies of those in the pure lands and the bodies in cyclic existence. Since there is no true suffering there, then as a practitioner, it does not make a big difference going to the pure lands. Since there is suffering in a samsaric environment and no suffering there, renunciation will be generated quicker here. Hence, it will be more difficult to generate renunciation there.

Why bodhisattvas pray to be born in the pure lands:

Student 3: Granted, but he is not going to the pure land as an ordinary practitioner. He is going as a bodhisattva. How then does a bodhisattva end up there? I thought he is practicing for full enlightenment? If it is better for him to practice in samsara and a faster way of becoming fully enlightened in samsara, then how come he ended up in a pure land where his ability to become enlightened will be delayed?

Khenrinpoche: It is clear that, there are ordinary non-bodhisattvas who take rebirth in pure lands. But it is also clear that, there are ordinary bodhisattvas who take rebirths in pure lands. If there are ordinary bodhisattvas who take rebirths in pure lands, then one needs to ask the question as to why they had to go there. Taking rebirths in the pure lands require a very strong yearning to be born there. Based on that, one needs to make very strong aspirational prayers. One then has some chance of being born there. One does not take rebirth there by accident. The point is that, being born there is by intention.

Student 3: I accept that.

Khenrinpoche: If it is quicker to achieve enlightenment in a place of samsara than in the pure lands. Then why do bodhisattvas wish to go to pure lands? If you think about it, the reason these bodhisattvas who go to the pure lands is that, they have *fears of sufferings of cyclic existence*. What would be the implication?

Student 3: It sounds like they have lost that courage to work for sentient beings, even though they may still have the wish to do so. Going there might be an easier way to become enlightened.

Khenrinpoche: Those [ordinary] bodhisattvas who pray to and are reborn in the pure lands are probably those who are:

Afraid of being [involved in] the sufferings of cyclic existence and then coming under the control of karma and afflictions.

The general prerequisites for being born in the pure land for an ordinary being:

Hence, they pray to go the pure lands. Perhaps their goals still remain the same, that is to achieve enlightenment.

Student 3: Could they end up in the pure land not necessarily because they prayed for it, but because of the power of their practice. This is due to the story of *Potawa*, who repeatedly prayed to go to the hells for the hell beings' sake, yet at the time of his death, he complained that he only sees Dakas and Dakinis.

Khenrinpoche: I am not sure. It is stated very clearly in the teachings that, for *ordinary beings* to be born in Amitabha's pure land, one needs to have: 1) Single-pointed yearning to go there, 2) repeatedly bring to mind Amitabha and His pure land, 3) repeated aspirational prayers to go there. There are such accounts like what you have mentioned. But these accounts are taught in the context of the benefits of generating bodhicitta. It is illustrating how beneficial generating bodhicitta is. The stronger the bodhicitta, the more merit one accumulates, likewise, the stronger one's bodhicitta, the further one will be from the lower realms. Due to the vast accumulation of merit, this could result in a rebirth in the pure land.

As with historical accounts one finds in the teachings, there are many examples that often go against the generate structure of the [teachings]. These do occur, so it is something one needs to think about. But in general, for an ordinary being, to be born in the pure lands, the prerequisites must gather.

Why an initial attainment of the Mahayana path of seeing must be achieved on the basis of a desire realm body:

In *Vasubandhu's Treasure of Manifest Knowledge (Abhidharmkosa)*, it is stated that, one achieves the path of seeing for the very first time on the basis of a desire realm body. Although the *Abhidharmkosa* is generally a Hinayana text, but I am not sure whether this position is necessarily an assertion of the Hinayana tenets or not. The reason is that, to generate the path of seeing for the very first time in one's entire existence since beginningless time, one needs a very strong mind of renunciation.

Hence, it is said that, such an initial achievement of the path of seeing must be accomplished on the basis of a desire realm body. It is also mentioned clearly in this same text, that when one is already on the *Supreme Mundane Quality* of the path of preparation, the person would not take rebirth in the form or formless realms. This is because, they would be transitioning from this level onto the path of seeing within the same meditative equipoise. But prior to that, on the levels of *Forbearance* and below on the path of preparation, there are persons from there who do take rebirths in the form and formless realms. If one gather all such information together, since there is not much disenchantment with cyclic existence in the pure lands, does that then mean that, the *ordinary* beings in the pure lands have to take rebirth in the desire realms before they can achieve the path of seeing for the first time?

Debating whether ordinary beings can achieve enlightenment in the pure lands:

Khenrinpoche: If you say yes, then the implication is that, [for ordinary beings] you cannot achieve enlightenment in the pure land. This is because, one still needs to be reborn in the desire realms first.

Hence, there are two views: a) One view is quoting the *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge*, there is no achievement of enlightenment in the pure lands [for ordinary beings]. b) Other masters say that, once one is born in the pure lands [as an ordinary being], one will definitely achieve enlightenment there. This is due to the power of the basis, the type of rebirth one has, one has no negativities and sufferings. One will never have to take rebirth in cyclic existence again due to the force of karma and afflictions. In the commentary on the *Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land*, it is said that for the beings there taking rebirths in cyclic existence, it can only happen due to the force of their prayers. Of course, those in the pure lands who do actually make strong prayers to be born in cyclic existence are probably bodhisattvas. This is because, it is only they who have the courage to aspire to do that to work for sentient beings.

Stating the proof that it takes longer to achieve enlightenment in the pure lands:

Student 3: If the reason a bodhisattva being born in the pure land is due to him being scared of the sufferings in cyclic existence, why would he now pray to return to cyclic existence?

Khenrinpoche: This is merely a discussion of the possibilities. This is not saying that it is the case for sure. It is stated clearly that, there are [bodhisattvas] in the pure lands who pray to come [back to cyclic existence] and [subsequently] take rebirth in cyclic existence due to the powers of their prayers. It is also clear that, those who go there are doing it out of fear. Since this is the case, then why are they coming back? It is not possible to make prayers there to come back into cyclic existence when one lacks strong motivation, courage and compassion. They would aspire for this in the first place.

If that is the case, then what other answer would there be, other than saying that it will take a longer time to achieve enlightenment in the pure lands? They see that, by taking rebirth in a samsaric environment, their disenchantment with samsara is stronger, bodhicitta is stronger. If one's bodhicitta is stronger, then one would achieve enlightenment quicker.

This is what I think, this is the reason for them to make prayers to get out of pure land.

Stating that the body of an ordinary bodhisattvas who is reborn back into cyclic existence from the pure lands is not true suffering:

Student 4: For the ordinary bodhisattvas in the pure lands making prayers to take rebirth back into cyclic existence, since it is not due to karma and afflictions, then what sort of aggregates would they possess?

Khenrinpoche: Good question. Can anyone answer that? Is the body of the ordinary bodhisattva who has taken rebirth in cyclic existence from the pure land a true suffering like oneself? The body of such an ordinary bodhisattva [who has taken rebirth back into cyclic existence from the pure land] is not a mental body. What other options are there, is it true suffering? If it is, then what are the implications/ absurd consequences? The implication is that, if one says that such a body is a true suffering, then that must be the result of karma and afflictions. It then follows that, there are karma and afflictions in the continuum of such a person in the pure land.

Student 5: In the first place, there were no explanations of how an ordinary person or bodhisattva who is reborn in the pure land does not possess karma and afflictions. He did not practice abandoning them, yet when he is reborn there, his karma and afflictions automatically disappears.

Khenrinpoche: It is not stated that, their karma and afflictions have been abandoned, but it is stopped through the force of the [environment]. This is what the text says.

Student 5: This would mean that they would still possess karma and afflictions. Therefore, when they come back to cyclic existence, those karma and afflictions manifest as true suffering.

Khenrinpoche: It does not manifest in the pure lands.

Student 5: Not manifest in the pure lands but in cyclic existence. This is because, they are still in possession of karma and afflictions. So somewhere in their continuum, they still possess them.

Khenrinpoche: If one considers the twelve links of dependent-origination, to acquire a contaminated aggregates of true suffering, the three actualizing factors craving, grasping and potential existence must be present. If they are not manifest, then one cannot actualize the result. So if the actualizing factors are not manifest, then the actualizing karma is not [activated], then one cannot have such a result.

Student 5: Would they not possess such actualizing factors in their continuum in the pure lands even though these are stopped? Then at the time of death, if these actualizing factors cannot manifest in the pure lands, then there is no way they can take rebirth back in cyclic existence.

How there can be a body of an ordinary being which is acquired due to prayers and not due to karma and afflictions:

Khenrinpoche: That is why, they say that such a rebirth from the pure lands into cyclic existence is not due to the force of karma and afflictions. Essentially, what we are trying to ascertain is whether the rebirth from the pure land back to, for example, the desire realm, is due to karma and afflictions or not.

Student 5: Then it is very clear it is not due to karma and afflictions.

Khenrinpoche: So if it is not due to karma and afflictions, there is only one answer left. It is due to the power of prayers.

Student 5: So there is [an ordinary being's] body that is formed due to the powers of prayers.

Khenrinpoche: That is why there is this qualm that, if one takes rebirth from the pure land and becoming a human, would that human body be a true suffering?

Student 4: Then is that a body of true suffering that is due to prayers?

Khenrinpoche: Why is the body and mind complex one has, called the contaminated appropriated aggregates? The only reason is that, it is a result of karma and afflictions. If one takes rebirth as a human being from the pure land, such a rebirth is not due to force of karma and afflictions, but due to the force of prayers, then one has to say that, such a body is not true suffering.

Student 6: When the rinpoches take rebirth, are these true suffering?

Khenrinpoche: If your guru in question is in reality a Buddha or a bodhisattva superior, then of of course there is no need to mention whether [his rebirth here] is due to karma and afflictions or not. But the [qualm] here is that of an ordinary person and not a superior. It is mentioned in the teachings on the *Stages of Clear Realizations*, *The Perfection of Wisdom Literature* that, bodhisattva superiors do take on an animal body, but this is in the *aspect* of an animal body and not an actual animal body. Of course, this is [alright to assert] for bodhisattva superiors. But the question is, can one extend such an explanation for ordinary beings? In the teachings on *Correctly Devoting to a Virtuous Friend*, it is said that from one's side, one has to view one's virtuous friend who is not sick, but merely showing the aspect of being sick, as well as showing many other aspects. In reality, he is not sick but looks like it. If the person is really a Buddha or a bodhisattva, then there is meaning to say that they are showing the aspects.

But one cannot say that, an ordinary being is showing the aspect. He is not showing the ordinary aspect of being sick but *is* actually sick and so forth.

In the Buddha's life story, he was born, aged and then passed away. From the Mahayana perspective, it is said that the Buddha did not die but merely manifested passing away.

How there are different strengths of the minds of renunciation, compassion and bodhicitta:

Student 6: Bodhisattvas in the pure lands pray to be born back as a human because they can practice tantra and achieve enlightenment in one lifetime. I have not heard that they pray to be born in cyclic existence so as to develop renunciation easily and quickly. This is because, to be reborn as bodhisattvas in the pure lands, they would have already developed bodhicitta. This means they would have already developed renunciation. Why would they still pray to be reborn here to develop renunciation quickly [again]?

Khenrinpoche: There is a difference in the strength of their minds that generate renunciation and compassion. Prior to achieving enlightenment, Shakyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Buddha were both bodhisattvas. But it was Shakyamuni Buddha who had achieved enlightenment quicker than Maitreya Buddha. This is because, it was said that his compassion was stronger. This is even though it was Maitreya Buddha who became a bodhisattva first, who generated bodhicitta much earlier than Shakyamuni Buddha. But it was Shakyamuni Buddha who achieved enlightenment earlier than Maitreya Buddha. This happened because of the strength of the bodhicitta that Shakyamuni Buddha had generated while he was on the path.

The point here is that, there is a difference in the strength of renunciation and bodhicitta in the minds of the persons who are in the pure lands and those in this world, for example. Due to such differences, there is a difference in the strength in bodhicitta, hence, [also] the speed of achieving enlightenment.

Khenrinpoche: Whatever we have discussed today is not my final answer, we are just having some discussions to get more idea, that's all. You can think more. I don't have the exact answer, but it is good to think more.

The disadvantages of cherishing oneself and the benefits of cherishing others:

As <i>Shantideva</i> said in his <i>Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds</i> , all the happiness in this world comes from cherishing others, while all the problems and sufferings in this world come from cherishing oneself.
Perhaps one can use this verse as the basis for continually reflecting how: <i>All happiness comes from cherishing others and all problems and sufferings come from cherishing oneself.</i>
It is evident if one settles down to reflect on those times when one felt hurt and disturbed just by someone saying something unpleasant to one, or meeting even merely small challenges/ difficulties in life.
It is clear that, the feelings of hurt, uneasiness, disturbances and so forth are actually due to: <i>Holding onto one's 'I' as being very important and cherishing it so much.</i>
Conversely, if one's attitudes were reversed, rather than emphasizing one's happiness, if one is accustomed to thinking about the happiness of others, viewing them as more important than oneself, then even if one may receive the same criticisms from others, but due to thinking more of others, even though the words may be the same, but one experiences much less disturbances and sufferings. This is quite clear.
One has to investigate to see for oneself, whether this is true or not. When one is over-obsessed with one's happiness, would one suffer more than if one is not so obsessed and does not prioritize one's happiness over others?
If one checks this is very clear, when one believes that one is very precious and the most important person in the world, holding onto this attitude that oneself is more important than others, then even if the problem one faces is actually very small, but due to one's very strong self-cherishing attitude, then such small problems become very difficult to bear and tolerate.
The beneficial results of the future lives from cherishing others:
Besides the happiness of this life, which does come from cherishing others, 1) even the happiness of future lives, the good rebirths one aims for, such as rebirths of the humans and celestial realms, all come from taking care of and cherishing others.
Cherishing others does result in the happiness of future lives. But one has to understand how this is so.
The cause of a human or a celestial rebirth must be the cultivation of ethical discipline, intentionally refraining from harming others. By not harming others, one is in a way taking care of and cherishing others. Due to this, one gets a good rebirth in cyclic existence.
2) A pleasant physical demeanor, appearance and conducive helpers in one's life are the results of having practiced patience.
3) Having prosperity is the result of having practiced generosity.
Such practices of generosity, ethical discipline and patience can only be accomplished in dependence on taking care of, cherishing and not harming sentient beings.
The faults of cherishing oneself:
The opposite of this would be, not considering and caring about the happiness and welfare of others, but merely emphasizing one's own happiness, following one's self-cherishing thought. This leads to disregarding others, through this, one ends up creating many different negativities. This is because, in the absence of cherishing others, one may end up disregarding them.
Due to that, perhaps some people would end up taking the lives of others, take things belonging to others, do not practice generosity due to miserliness and so forth. Hence, many different kinds of negativities are created due to disregarding others. These come from neglecting the welfare and happiness of others.
Depending on the severity and weight of the negativities, one would be reborn either as a hell being, hungry ghost or animal.
If one takes care and cherishes others, then one will help others through, for example, giving, refraining from harming them, offering service to them, respecting them. The results of all such virtuous actions will be experienced by oneself in the future.
If one follows one's self-cherishing attitude and disregard others, then one will feel a disconnect with them. One would feel that there is no relationship between oneself and others. This could make one feel arrogant, to look down and disregard others
The ripening results of such actions will have to be experienced by none other than oneself. Due to having disregarded the welfare of others, looking down on them and putting them down, from life to life, one will experience the results that is similar. Others will look down on, despise and disregard one.
It is emphasized in the <i>Mind Training and Stages of the Path Literatures</i> that, one has to reflect well, through various angles, the faults and disadvantages of self-cherishing and the advantages, benefits of cherishing others. Such reflections are critical.

Having reflected well on the faults of self-cherishing and the benefits of cherishing others, what to cultivate next:

On the basis of having reflected well and developed some feeling and understanding of the faults of self-cherishing and the advantages of cherishing others, that this is the source of one's happiness, one then puts such reflection and understanding in one's actual practical action in daily life. For example:

1) Within one's means and abilities, one can offer material gifts and Dharma to others [cultivating generosity].

2) One then continually relies on mindfulness and vigilance to check one's body, speech and mind to refrain in thought and action from harming others [cultivating ethical discipline].

3) If one really feels and understands the benefits and advantages of cherishing others, on the basis of having love and compassion, then in one's interactions and relationships with others, one can see and feel, that sentient beings is a merit field for one to accumulate merit [cultivating love and compassion].

4) It is said that, with such understanding of the benefits and advantages of cherishing others, one then looks at sentient beings with love and affection. Due to such views, one will then be able to respect them [cultivating respect].

How cherishing sentient beings in such ways are the same as cultivation with respect to the merit field:

It is said in the teachings that, if one can look at sentient beings with love and compassion, then this will really please the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

It is also said that, by looking at sentient beings with love, affection and compassion, if such thoughts do really arise, then this becomes the supreme offering to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

If one looks at sentient beings with thoughts of disregard, anger and wishing to harm them, then it is no different in meaning from disregarding the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

It is said that, if one really wishes to please the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, then this is what one should do: look upon sentient beings with love, affection and benefit them. This becomes the best and supreme offering, as well as an offering of practice.

It is said in the teachings that, if one makes a small offering to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas motivated by love and compassion for sentient beings, even though the physical offering may be small, but the merit created is so much greater than making immense amount of physical offerings not motivated by love and compassion for others.

It is mentioned in the teachings that, one's guru, special meditational deities and sentient beings are similar in being able to grant one all the common and supreme realizations.

How the accumulation of merit with respect to sentient beings allow one to cultivate other *Mind Training* techniques:

Hence, when referring to *Mind Training*, one must understand the most important essential point is that:

Self-cherishing results in all the problems and faults.

One has to reflect until one gains certainty about that. One also has to reflect and gain certainty that:

Cherishing others is the source of all happiness.

This is because, it is only when one understands this, that one can understand other mind training teachings like the visualizations and the mind training techniques that come from all the mind training texts, including this text.

It is also on the basis of having realized that first, that one can start doing the practice of *Tonglen*, taking in the sufferings of others and giving one's happiness to others.

The practice of taking on the sufferings of others and giving one's happiness to others is a method to further enhance one's love and compassion. Through giving one's happiness to others, this is meant for one to develop, enhance and strengthen one's love; through taking on the sufferings of others, this is to develop, enhance and strengthen one's compassion.

After having developed well one's love and compassion through the visualization of taking on others' sufferings and giving one's happiness to others, it is then that, the development of one's *Wholehearted Resolve* would be possible.

It is only with a wholehearted resolve that, one can proceed to develop the result, generating bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment.

Verse 15:

15 When I am reborn into an impure land, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for always cultivating impure vision. From now on, I shall cultivate only pure vision.

Impure land here refers to one's samsaric environment of cyclic existence, where one has to live in and spend one's life.

This is an environment such that, it does not matter who one interacts and makes friends with, every single relationship is only a cause of problem, it is just suffering in reality. Whatever one sees is a cause for problems and sufferings.

How one's impure vision of the world are due to the projection of one's mind and self-cherishing:

If one thinks of the formation of such an impure world, does such an impure samsaric environment exist from its own side?
If one thinks about it, it is merely the result of a projection of one's own distorted and mistaken mind.
Due to the force of one's distorted mistaken mind, one accumulates contaminated karma, through the force of this, one then [experiences] this projection/ view of such an impure samsaric environment/ world.
Such an impure world did not come into existence from its own side.
Previously it was shown, how the bodhisattva heroes purposely take rebirth in cyclic existence to benefit sentient beings.
Although they maybe present in the same impure world as one, but their experiences are radically different from one's. Even though everything for one in cyclic existence is a cause for suffering, perhaps for them, they do not experience [it that way].
This is because, whatever environment that presents itself to one, whatever one sees, is a cause for problem. Unlike one's experiences, whatever they see and experience in such an environment do not cause problems nor sufferings to them.
Such bodhisattva heroes, particularly the bodhisattva superiors, maybe in the same physical samsaric environment as oneself, but their experiences are radically different from one's. One's experiences are that which are full of distortions, problems and sufferings, whereas theirs are not like that at all. The reason there is such a big difference is because:
<i>They only have thoughts of cherishing others, while one only has self-cherishing. Hence, the differences in the type of experiences is essentially due to having or not having self-cherishing.</i>
Hence this also shows that the world one knows of is not self-established, does not exist on its own accord from its own side.
The reasons one is born in the impure land, with impure appearances appearing and then experiencing such impure appearances are because, one has always cultivated impure visions. Henceforth, one pledges to cultivate only pure visions.

Understanding that, how one then cultivates pure vision:

The ways in which one can cultivate pure vision is shown in the examples given in the teachings: When one meets a person who irritates or harms one, one should use such experiences as a means to exhaust one's negativities. One can think:
<i>He is the manifestation of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who are in that aspect, here to help me exhaust my negativities.</i>
If one can have such thoughts that such a person that is harming one is a manifestation of Buddhas and bodhisattvas for the sole purpose of purifying and exhausting one's negativities, then this will make such experiences much more bearable.
Likewise, if there are people asking or begging one for money, one can think of him as the manifestation of Buddhas and bodhisattvas who are in such aspects to help one overcome one's miserliness and complete one's accumulation of merit. If one sees that person this way, then when this happens, one would not feel disturbed.
Whatever difficulties or problems one experiences in life, are the results of one's own negative karma. Even the existence of the harmdoer who harms one, is the result of one's own negative karma. No one else is responsible.
Whether one sees the harmdoer as the manifestation of Buddhas and bodhisattvas to help exhaust one's negative karma, or even if one merely sees him as someone here to exhaust one's negative karma, the fact is that, he is here to deplete one's negative karma. Such actions are what the gurus, Buddhas and meditational deities are supposed to do anyway.
<i>Therefore in this sense, whether it is one's gurus, Buddhas, deities or the harm-giver, They are the same in that, their job here is to deplete one's negative karma.</i>
<i>Khenrinpoche:</i> They used to say that, when you go to <i>Wu Tai Shan</i> for the first time, the first person that you see is the manifestation of <i>Manjushri</i> .
When you go there, if you first see some beggar, who can be harming you, or a worker, a driver, from the very beginning, if your mind has such [view] thinking: "This must be the manifestation of <i>Manjushri</i> !" Then you will have a respectful attitude, [which will be] different from whatever [attitudes you used to have]. This is the same idea.
That time [when I first went there], I saw one man, so I thought: "This is <i>Manjushri</i> !" After that, I didn't see him anymore. There are many stories like that. Whether in reality it may or may not be <i>Manjushri</i> , it does not matter. But when you set up your mind like that, this will be really helpful for your mind.
So here, it is the same thing. Receiving harm from someone, if your mind thinks that it could be the manifestation of <i>Manjushri</i> , Buddhas or my gurus, then there are less problems in your mind. You do not become so angry, upset or mad.
<i>This is how your mind plays in your brain in different ways. [This is how your mind projects different appearances as your mental images.]</i>

The problem with one's usual impure ways of thinking and perceiving:

One's usual attitude is that, when one is harmed, one considers oneself as the poor victim, one's harmdoer as the aggressor and completely at fault. One is [totally innocent]. One then holds onto to such thoughts.
Then psychologically, one gets very upset. This is because, so long as one holds on very strongly that he is the harmdoer, one will always be upset, one's mind will just be disturbed and not be at peace. This is really meaningless and of no benefit.
[One is already experiencing] a problem, above this, one gives oneself more problems by getting continually upset. Due to that, one continually accumulates negativities.
Hence, the verse says: <i>From now on, I shall cultivate only pure vision.</i> This is the promise one makes to oneself.
One finds infinite advice in the teachings telling one that, one should not focus on the faults of other but rather concentrate on their qualities. One also finds statements like: <i>Regard all sentient beings like the Buddhas.</i> The essential meaning is the same.

Verse 16:

<i>16 When I am separated from helpful and loving friends, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for luring away others' companions. From now on I shall not separate others from their companions.</i>
What should one think, when one is separated from people one emotionally feels very close to, or who are very helpful? Such events happen rather often in life. When it does, generally, people feel a great loss, are very hurt and become very disturbed.
Hence, it is very useful to think of practices of the person of small capacity such as impermanence.
One thinks that, everything is in the nature of impermanence and change in that, there is no real stability in life. Thinking in such ways are very helpful for one's mind.
Mere intellectual knowledge and understanding of impermanence, how things are in the nature of change, is useless on its own. This is because, even if oneself or someone else are able to explain what impermanence is all about and so forth, but when the problems come, [such mere knowledge alone] will not be helpful at all.
Without the experiences and feelings that have to come from repeated reflections, when problems do come, one would not be able to feel comforted by the [mere] words alone.
It is only on the basis of having continually thought about impermanence, how things are unstable and so forth to the extend one engenders some feelings from one's heart, that when problems really do happen, due to repeated [familiarity with] such reflections, one would be able to remember or recreate such experiences and understanding, this will then be helpful.
Hence, it is extremely important to meditate consistently and continually on impermanence. With such experiences, when separation from helpful and loving friends do really occur, one would then be able to remind oneself that, one is experiencing the ripening results of similar actions one has committed in the past.
This is because, sometimes in the past, one has lured away the companions of others, caused others to be separated from their companions, or caused divisions amongst people.
Since such unpleasant experiences are the results of one's negative karma, henceforth, one promises to oneself that, one will not cause others to be separated from their loved ones, companions, lure and cause them not be on the other side but to be on one's side. Essentially, it is <i>not to cause disunity amongst people who are harmonious.</i>

Verse 17:

<i>17 When all the holy ones are displeased with me, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for casting them aside and resorting to bad companions. From now on I shall renounce bad companions.</i>
<i>When all the holy ones are displeased with me:</i> Holy ones could be one's gurus or special extraordinary beings. People can become very upset and disturbed, when the holy ones are displeased or upset with them for whatever reasons.
One may be very devoted to a special being, or one's teacher, being very respectful and having a lot of faith, but somehow, it does not matter what one does, the virtuous friend or guru may not reciprocate, or may even be unhappy and displeased.
When this happens, generally, most people cannot take it and the minds become very disturbed. There are some who even get upset, generate wrong views and become very negative.
The teachings say that, when such events happen, the solution is not to blame the special holy beings, but to blame oneself and take responsibility. This is because, this is the weapon of one's own evil deeds turn upon one.
In the past, even if one has met with real virtuous friends or special holy beings, one did not follow their advice and follow after them. Instead, one relied on bad companions. In this context:
<i>The bad companions refer to people who are just concerned about their own welfare, Only working for their own happiness. They are those who act in ways that are opposite to the Dharma.</i>

When something like this happens to one, from one's own side, one feels that one has been respectful, devoted and yet, [one's object of devotion] is still not pleased with one and is even upset with one.
When one experiences this, one cannot take it, one becomes unhappy [and may even develop aversion]. The reason one feels unhappy when the holy beings are displeased with one is the same as before, it is all due to one's own self-cherishing.
<i>If one sees this point, then it is clear that, the problem does not lie with the holy being.</i>
This is something that <i>everybody</i> has experienced and will experience. It cannot be the case that, the virtuous friend or holy being is always looking at one with a smile. When he is not smiling, one thinks something is wrong. The problem does not lie with the teacher/ virtuous friend/ holy being, as they cannot be smiling all the time.
However, when they failed to smile, one does not like it and thinks that they are unhappy with one. One then becomes unhappy. [At the core], the problem actually lies with one's self-cherishing.
The essence of these advice is that: <i>One should always be looking inside and not blame others, thinking: "What did I do, how was I responsible for this?"</i>

Verses 18, 19 and 20:

<i>18 When others sin against me by exaggeration or deprecation, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for reviling the holy ones. From now on I shall not revile others by exaggeration or deprecation.</i>
<i>19 When my material necessities waste away, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for scorning others' necessities. From now on I shall provide for others' necessities.</i>
<i>20 When my mind is unclear and my heart is sad, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for causing others to sin. From now on I shall renounce contributing to others' sinning.</i>
When one's heart just feels sad for no apparent reason, when one's mind is unclear, foggy or pitch-black when one meditates, then one may think that it is due to the disturbances of non-human spirit harming one.
This verse is saying that, it is not the case. In the past, one did not cultivate virtue, rather, one is always engaged in nonvirtue. This is the weapon of one's own negative karma returning to haunt one.
Hence, one makes a promise, trains and practices to not become a condition for others to sin.
If one proclaims and presents oneself as a practitioner, particularly as a Mahayana practitioner, but if in one's daily life conduct, physically one does not carry oneself well [in the presence of others], as well as speaking harshly, this will put others off and one will become the condition to cause them to create negativities.
Hence, it says: <i>From now on I shall renounce contributing to others' sinning.</i>
This is something that one should reflect for oneself, whether one is carrying oneself well or not. If one does say something, one should check whether whatever one is going to say will be a cause for others to be upset or not.
Often, people get upset or become disappointed when they see one's behavior and think: "You see, Buddhists or Mahayana Buddhists are like that," They get a bad impression of the followers of Mahayana tradition through one's actions, based on what they see one doing or saying. One should check if one is contributing to others creating negativities this way or not.
One has to be careful and check oneself [continually] against becoming a condition for others to create negativities.

Student: [Of the nine defilements taught in tathagata essence, are the first four, a path of seeing abandonment? Is the intellectually acquired apprehension of true existence that which motivates the accumulation of projecting karma? Is the innate affliction that which nourishes the karmic seed?]

Khenrinpoche: That which motivates the accumulation of projecting karma are the innate afflictions and not the intellectually acquired afflictions. The ignorance that belongs to the twelve links of dependent-origination is posited as the innate affliction. Hence, that which motivates the accumulation of projecting karma for cyclic existence has to be an innate affliction and not the intellectually acquired affliction. While it is true that, when one achieves the path of seeing, the intellectually acquired afflictions are abandoned, one also does not accumulate fresh projecting karma, this is not a result of having abandoned the intellectually acquired afflictions. The reason one does not accumulate fresh projecting karma when one achieves the path of seeing is because, one has realized selflessness directly. Due to such direct realization of selflessness, this particular wisdom can harm ignorance. Henceforth, ignorance has been so weakened to the point that, it cannot motivate any fresh accumulation of projecting karma.

Therefore, it is not that the intellectually acquired afflictions motivate projecting karma and that the innate afflictions nourish the karmic seeds. That which motivates the accumulation of projecting karma are the innate afflictions.

One cannot establish that, the first four defilements are necessarily path of seeing abandonments, which are intellectually acquired afflictions. This is because, there are also innate forms there as well.

Verse 21:

21 When I am deeply troubled over my lack of success, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for hindering the work of the holy ones. From now on I shall renounce all hindering.

Lack of success here can mean different things. If one examines it in terms of Dharma practice, then the lack of success in Dharma practice is a kind of lack of success.

One may claim to be practicing Dharma or one may want to practice Dharma. One may even go going about doing it. But somehow, this does not really become a practice. One may end up merely accumulating negativities. As a result of this, the mind then becomes disturbed. This is a kind of a lack of success.

In terms of worldly activities, for example, one may be doing some business to acquire wealth, but of course things and events may not always turn out the way one wishes. In this way, this is a lack of success.

In terms of Dharma practice, a lack of success could mean that:

***One's mind has become harder instead of becoming more disciplined and subdued.
One probably does not begin Dharma practice with the intention of making a loss.
Even though one may be engaged in Dharma practice, but somehow, one's mind does not get subdued.
One may perhaps get involved with more negativities.***

If this lack of success [in Dharma practice] happens, then one has to remember that, this is the ripening effect of the negativities accumulated in the past.

When one encounters such lack of success, one may wonder what the reason may be. This verse says that:

It is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for hindering the work of the holy ones.

This could be a result of causing obstacles to holy beings. For example:

- 1) There can be people who are giving teachings, one may cause interruptions and problems to them.
- 2) When there are people who are engaging in virtue, whether doing their daily recitations, studies or meditation, one may interrupt, cause problems/ obstacles for their practices. One can then become a condition for them to turn towards nonvirtue.

These negative karmas will ripen in the future in the experience of having the lack of success within oneself.

When some people encounter problems, they put the blame on the Dharma for their lack of success, thinking that the Dharma did not benefit them, that their lack of success is the fault of the Dharma and so forth.

One must always remember that it is not the fault of the Dharma. Rather, it is one's own fault as one has accumulated the cause in the past for one's lack of success now.

Whatever *Mind Training* instructions and advice of *Lojong* there are, it is the spirit of such teachings to not look for the faults/ problems outside oneself. All such instructions are in unison in saying that, whatever problems one is experiencing, the 'culprit' is oneself and no one else. Hence, the faults lie in oneself.

Whatever problems one is experiencing, instead of looking for the [source of the] problems outside oneself, one should reflect on the workings of karma, its effects, conclude and realize that, oneself is at fault as one has created the cause.

Based on such understanding on karma and its effects, one makes a strong determination/ pledge to give up/ renounce causing obstacles to others when they are engaging in virtue.

On top of refraining from causing obstacles to others in their practice of virtue, one should even rejoice sincerely in that, really feel that from one's heart, and offer praise to their practice of virtue.

One should then live by such pledges [and rejoicing]. When one does so, one then actually accumulates such virtues. These then become the cause for one's own success in the future.

Verse 22:

22 When my guru is displeased with me no matter what I do, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for acting duplicitously toward the holy Dharma. From now on I shall reduce my duplicity toward the Dharma.

Sometimes, due to a lack of skillfulness, one may end up doing something that displeases one's virtuous friend. When one's virtuous friend is displeased, one may then get upset, worried, depressed or disturbed. One may then end up generating wrong views and negative thoughts. One may then lose faith and devotion towards one's virtuous friend.

When such events occur, then one has to remember not to blame one's virtuous friend.

According to this verse, the cause for such experiences is that, in the past, one has acted in pretense and having duplicity in the Dharma.

The meaning of *Duplicity*:

Duplicity here means, for example, when one is in the presence of others, one looks holy, peaceful, calm and subdued. One puts up such appearances or one gives others such appearances.
But when one is not in the presence of others, one then acts in a completely different way, having bad conduct, engaging in negativities and so forth. This is the meaning of duplicity.
Another example: when one's guru tells one not to do/ abandon this or that and that one should do this or that instead, one then promises that one will do so. However, after one has made the promise and when in his absence, one acts contrary to it.
Instead of abandoning what is to be abandoned and cultivating what should be cultivated, one merely engages in nonvirtues and negativities. This is another example of acting with duplicity.
When [this nonvirtuous] karma ripens, then as mentioned in this verse, no matter what one does, one's guru is displeased.
Realizing that, one then makes a promise to not act with duplicity towards the Dharma henceforth.
This is teaching one not to act with duplicity in that, <i>What one looks like on the outside must actually accord with who one really is on the inside.</i>
An example is a piece of fruit. It should just look ripe both outside and in. Even if it does not look ripe on the outside, but if it is ripe on the inside, then it is still alright.
Likewise, as a practitioner, if there is substance on the inside, then that is all that really matters. Even if on the outside one does not really look like one has some substance, that is really alright.
Of course, being unripe on the inside and out is the worse. This is because, there is not much point in saying that, one is practicing the Dharma as there has not been any benefit.
Even if one's external behavior is not so pleasant, but if on the inside one is calm and happy, then this is quite alright.
Of course, the best is that, if one is ripe on the outside and in, besides being happy and calm on the inside, externally if one's conduct is also pleasant, then that will be perfect.
Although one does not know others' minds and others does not know one's mind, but generally, external conduct is important, especially when one calls oneself a practitioner, particularly a follower of the Mahayana teachings, then as what was mentioned in the earlier verses, one's conduct should not be a condition for others to accumulate nonvirtue or get upset.
One's external conduct is still important, as a Tibetan saying goes: <i>Even if your realization is equal to the gods, but your conduct should accord with mankind.</i>
Even if one has realizations and so forth, still, that does not mean that one can go around saying all sorts of things. Therefore, external conduct is still considered to be important.

Verse 23:

<i>23 When everyone contradicts me, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for belittling shame and [embarrassment]. From now on, I shall avoid rough behavior.</i>
In such situations when everyone is against one, even though one has not done anything in this life [to deserve that], but one gets criticized or belittled by everybody [for no apparent reason]. Then one should remember that, there is nothing else to think other than that it is the result of one's own karma. It is always about this, hence this is the best way to think.
The sort of karma one has accumulated to experience having everyone contradicting or criticizing one, even if one did not do anything [to deserve that] in this life is that: <i>it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for belittling shame and [embarrassment].</i> This is in relation to one's teachers, parents, loved ones, relatives and so forth in the past.
It is said that, due to disregarding shame and embarrassment, one engages in all sorts of nonvirtue. These were already taught in <i>Mind and Mental Factors</i> : Shame and embarrassment, as well as the lack of shame and embarrassment.
<i>The lack of shame:</i> the mind that does not refrain from committing nonvirtue on account of oneself.
<i>Shame:</i> For example, if one has taken the lay vow of abstaining from alcohol. When one is in a situation where this is available and if one wishes, one could choose to drink. But due to having taken such a vow and one remembers one has taken it, one then thinks: "Since I have taken the vow/ promise not to consume alcohol, then I should not do so."
When one abstains from drinking alcohol on account of oneself having taken such a vow, then this is an example of a mind of shame. Hence, shame is a virtuous mental factor that causes one to abstain from nonvirtue on account of oneself.
<i>Khenrinpoche:</i> [Do you understand] shame to be a good or bad thing? I think shame is good, shameless is bad.
If one has taken the vow to not kill, then when one finds oneself in a situation where one could kill if one wishes to, but one nevertheless abstains from killing on account of having taken the vow of not killing, then this is having shame. If one does not feel shameful, then one could choose to kill or drink alcohol.

Embarrassment: This is abstaining from nonvirtue on account of others. If there is an opportunity where one could kill or drink alcohol if one wishes to but nevertheless abstains from nonvirtues on account of others, then this is embarrassment.
Hence, embarrassment is the mind which abstains from nonvirtue on account of others.
For example, if one has taken the lay vow of abstaining from alcohol or not killing, if one is in a situation where one could kill or drink if one so wishes, but nevertheless abstains from such nonvirtues on account of say, one's guru or Buddhas, remembering: "I have taken these vows from my teacher," or "If I were to kill or drink, [the Buddhas] will know for sure."
Be it one's gurus, the Buddhas or someone, embarrassment is such a mind that abstains from nonvirtue on account of others.
Remembering that one's past disregard for shame and embarrassment are the causes for experiencing criticisms and blames from others, one makes a pledge to henceforth avoid rough behavior .
Rough behavior is essentially actions that do not accord with the Dharma. The point is that, henceforth with shame and embarrassment, one pledges to abstain from non-dharmic actions.

Verse 24:

24 When there is disagreement as soon as my companions gather, It is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for peddling my discontent and evil disposition everywhere. From now on without any ulterior motive, I shall behave well toward all.
Companions here literally means <i>entourage</i> . This includes those who work for one. The commentary says that, even if one has gathered a big following, with many people working [on one's behalf], who help one, even if one succeeds in bringing them into one's fold, but somehow, this does not last as they do not stay for long and soon leave.
This is a result of one's own bad conduct, which is a result of causing others to have disharmony and be separated in the past.
Generally it is a fact that, if one's own conduct and behavior is not very good, others would not stay with one for long.
Therefore, the solution is to have a pleasant disposition and to be honest, truthful [about it]. Here, one makes a pledge to have a straightforward, truthful and honest pleasant behavior.
Essentially, one should have a pleasant disposition, behave well, not to have an unpleasant disposition and be nasty.
The result will be that, in the future, one will have many helpers and friends who will stay with one for a long time.

Verse 25:

25 When all my kin become my enemies, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for harboring evil thoughts. From now on I shall reduce my deceit and guile.
For those who are close to one, starting with one's gurus, when one become distant from one's virtuous friends, when one's loved ones, friends or companions become enemies, when one experiences such results, one becomes unhappy and suffers.
Again at such times, one has to remember karma. When those who are close to one, those who matters very much become enemies, it is said that this is the result of one having harmed them in the past.
Even if one did not directly harmed them in the past, but from the depths of one's heart, one has harbored thoughts of malice towards them, [wishing to expose their faults and deprecate their qualities.]
As mentioned before, merely harboring malicious thoughts of wishing to harm others, just harboring such strong grudge and resentment itself are enough for one to accumulate karma which will ripen in the form of suffering experiences in the future.
It is possible that one may think: "I merely had thoughts of harming them but I didn't actually do anything bad to them, so I think I am alright [, it is not as bad as actually doing it]."
In reality this is not the case. If one were to merely harbor malicious thoughts strongly in one's mind for a long time, such resentment itself already motivates the accumulation of karma which would only be suffering one will have to experience.
Henceforth, one makes the pledge that, one will reduce deceit and guile. These two mental factors of deceit and guile were again mentioned in <i>Mind and Mental Factors</i> .
Deceit: Motivated by an attachment to material gains, praise, respect, reputation [and pleasure], this is a mind that purposely and intentionally hides one's faults from others.
Guile: Motivated by an attachment to material gains, respect, praise, reputation [and pleasure], this is a mind that displays a false behavior pretending to have qualities one does not possess.
Having said that, what is the relationship between the pledge to reduce one's deceit and guile, and experiencing one's kins/ loved ones becoming enemies, which is the result of one's harboring evil thoughts. [Why is it that one has to abandon deceit & guile so that these would not become a cause for evil thoughts to arise now that will cause loved ones to be enemies?]
Khenrinpoche: Do you see anything? Do you see the connection? I am not sure how it is connected together.

Verse 26:

26 When I am sick with consumption or edema, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for unlawfully and indiscriminately stealing others' wealth. From now on I shall renounce plundering others' wealth.

There may be different versions of the root texts, in my commentary it says: *When I am beset with obstacles and sicknesses.*

For example, when one is practicing the Dharma, one may meet with interferences from both humans and non-humans. One may also fall sick, be it tuberculosis or cancer. Whatever these sicknesses may be, the result is that one becomes very frail.

One becomes so physically weak to the point that one cannot really do much practice. When such an event happens, here translated as being due to **unlawfully and indiscriminately stealing others' wealth**.

Even though it is stealing, but the object from whom one steals from, in Tibetan it means for example, taking the possessions of the Three Jewels and using them.

Even though it is translated as **unlawfully**, but what it means is, if one is an 'ordained person' living in a monastic environment, but in reality is no longer ordained as one has broken the root vow, a defeat of the *pratimoksa* vow, then if one still [uses] the abode or the food and so forth, this would be unethically using the possessions of the Sangha community.

Or, this could mean that one can be partaking such possessions indiscriminately without any rules, guidelines or a care less attitude whether one's actions are virtuous or not.

Therefore, **From now on I shall renounce plundering others' wealth**. This means one pledges not to take and use the possessions of the Three Jewels.

Verse 27:

27 When my body is suddenly struck by contagious disease, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for committing acts that corrupted my vows. From now on I shall renounce nonvirtuous acts.

When one is suddenly being inflicted by contagious diseases, this is said to be the result of having transgressed one's *samaya* in the past. *Dam-tshig* in Tibetan means pledge or *samaya*. Whether it is a spiritual commitment, vow, precept or promise, if one keeps to these, one becomes good, excellent and holy, in Tibetan it is called *Dam-pa*.

If one transgresses one's *Dam-tsig*, then one will fall to the lower realms and suffer. Hence, one makes the pledge to henceforth abandon nonvirtues.

How the Buddha's effortless and spontaneous enlightened activities come about:

Qualm: With respect to the [second] quality of spontaneity of the Buddha, this is uncompounded. But since it functions to help sentient beings, it is dependent on the existence of sentient beings. If that is the case, why is it uncompounded? Conversely, it is also incorrect to say that it is compounded, since this would mean that effort and cause is required to perform the [enlightened activities] to benefit sentient beings which is not the case.

Khenrinpoche: Of the eight qualities mentioned in the Tathagata Essence, what is the second quality? Is that compounded or uncompounded? **Student:** Spontaneity and uncompounded.

Khenrinpoche: How do the Buddha's effortless and spontaneous enlightened activities come about? This was already addressed. It is said that this is made possible by the abandonment of the two obscurations. This quality of acting effortlessly and spontaneously without the need to depend on thought is a quality of the Buddhas only. It does not exist on sentient beings' grounds. They are not able to do so without effort. This is because, it is said that [sentient beings] have not abandoned the two obscurations.

Firstly, one needs to get an idea of what non-abiding nirvana/ enlightenment is or what nirvana is. This is an important point. It is therefore crucial to understand what enlightenment is all about. Like what *Nagarjuna* said about liberation: "Liberation is the extinction/ exhaustion of karma and afflictions." Therefore, into what are karma and afflictions exhausted? Essentially, it is the sphere of reality, emptiness. This is where all karma and afflictions, that is, **all elaborations**, are ceased. Essentially, this is what liberation is all about.

Even prior to knowing this, one first needs to know how suffering/ samsara came about/ arose. Essentially, the root of samsara is ignorance, the apprehension of true existence, which is a mind that actively believes that each and everything that exists, does so from its own side. Whatever appears to one, appears as being established from its own side, existing inherently.

Firstly, there is the appearance of true existence, one's mind then assents to such an appearance, believing that this is how things exist. Such a mind is called the apprehension of true existence. With this as the basis, incorrect mental attention sets in. Whether the [observed] object is good or bad, although in reality it is merely a projection of/ mere imputation by one's mind, but that is not how the object appears and not how one believes in. If one feels that it is a good object or person, it appears as completely good from its own side. Due to that, it appears to have qualities over and above what it actually possesses.

However, one does not realize that. One essentially exaggerates the attributes the qualities of the object. If it is good, one thinks that it is completely good from its own side. If it is bad, one thinks that it is completely bad from its own side. These have nothing to do with one's own perception, but that it is just right there coming from the side of the object.

Based on such appearances and belief, one develops very strong anger towards things one finds inherently repulsive. One develops very strong attachment for the objects one finds inherently pleasant or attractive. Based on that, one engages in all sorts of actions and accumulates karma, which results in continuous sufferings and problems.

Liberation is said to be a state of emptiness/ reality in which all elaborations have dissolved into. The word elaboration can mean a few things, but the fundamental elaboration here is the elaboration of true existence. It refers to the mind of ignorance that apprehends true existence. While things/ objects do not exist from its own side, the apprehension of true existence conceives of it to exist from its own side. Hence, it is actually an elaboration. This is because in reality, there is no true existence, but the mind of apprehension of true existence elaborates/ imputes/ exaggerates such inherent existence onto things and events [that do not possess such an attribute].

This elaboration, the apprehension of true existence, is a wrong consciousness from which all the problems and sufferings arise. Since it is a false elaboration of reality, then if one applies the antidote, which understands that there has never been any true existence and there will never be, when such an antidote is generated, it can weaken the apprehension of true existence. In so doing, one can remove such an apprehension of true existence.

When one eventually generates the wisdom that directly perceives emptiness, such a mind becomes an antidote that will be powerful enough to start overcoming ignorance, the apprehension of true existence. When the antidote, wisdom realizing emptiness, is generated, then that which it opposes, the apprehension of true existence, if one were to ask to where does it go, then there is nothing else to say other than emptiness. To where does the apprehension of true existence dissolve into? What does it cease into? ***It is ceased into the sphere of reality, the suchness of the mind.***

When the mind that is accompanied with defilements is separated from the suchness with defilement, what is left behind is essentially the suchness of the mind. Hence, liberation, the final sphere of reality, is merely this, as there is nothing else to point to.

It is the same with non-abiding nirvana. Where the two obscurations are completely separated from the [suchness of the] mind, what is left behind is the suchness. This is what is non-abiding nirvana, a suchness that is not accompanied by the two obscurations. Such a non-abiding nirvana is the second quality of spontaneity. Such a non-abiding nirvana is uncompounded.

Non-abiding nirvana is essentially the suchness of the mind that has been separated from the two obscurations.

Such an emptiness of the mind has always been there, it is just that along the way it acquires different names. When it is accompanied with the defilements, it is called suchness with defilement. When the two obscurations are removed, then it is no longer accompanied with the defilements and is thus called the non-abiding nirvana.

As one's mind progresses and acquires different names, then sometimes one may think that, at certain times it is compounded and at others, it became uncompounded. When referring to the final nature of the mind, the suchness/ emptiness of the mind, it has always been uncompounded and will always remain in the quality of being uncompounded.

If one thinks about it,

***The emptiness/ suchness of the mind is the basis from which samsara is established/ arises.
It is also this same suchness of the mind which makes nirvana possible.***

It is challenging to understand how all things are the elaborations/ display/ play/ nature of emptiness. Saying it is easy but understanding it is not. This is because, the mind is empty of existing inherently. Due to the suchness of the mind, there is samsara and there is also nirvana. If this is not the final nature of the mind, then there is no way for samsara and nirvana to exist. If the mind exists inherently, making a presentation of samsara and nirvana would not be feasible/ possible. However, one has to think why this is so.

***Samsara is established from within the emptiness of the mind,
Likewise, nirvana is also established from within the emptiness of the mind.***

With the non-abiding nirvana/ suchness of the mind as the basis, essentially an uncompounded phenomena, then the Buddha is spontaneous. His enlightened activities are effortless and spontaneous precisely because of this. However, his enlightened activities themselves are of course not uncompounded as they are compounded.

Student 1: Since bodhisattvas are disenchanted with taking rebirth through karma and afflictions, but there are also ordinary bodhisattvas who take rebirth through karma and afflictions. Would that be a contradiction?

Khenrinpoche: He says that since they already have renunciation for samsara, then why do they still take rebirth in samsara due to karma and afflictions. Can someone answer that?

Student 2: This is because they have not realized emptiness directly, which means they still have ignorance of the twelve links.

Khenrinpoche: His main doubt is that, they already have renounced samsara, so why do they still take rebirth in samsara?

Student 2: I think he has stronger compassion, hence he does not primarily cultivate the path to own liberation, rather, he focuses on cultivating bodhisattva path.

Khenrinpoche: So therefore, he has to take rebirth in samsara due to karma and afflictions? **Student 2:** Yes.

Khenrinpoche: Then your statement does not fit [the reason as an answer to his question]. The essence [of your statement] is that, due to great compassion to benefit sentient beings in samsara, he takes rebirth intentionally and through choice by karma and afflictions. This is the consequence of your reply.

Khenrinpoche: In a way, what [student 1] asks is a very simple question, but you must know how to answer. So, you must understand what he is asking: ordinary bodhisattvas already have renunciation, but why do they still take rebirth in samsara due to karma and afflictions? Is there contradiction here?

Student 3: They still do not have total control over their rebirths. So it is possible that they can still take rebirth [in samsara due to karma and afflictions]. As much as we do not like to get sick, but because we still do not have control, we still get sick. This is because, [an ordinary] bodhisattva still have ignorance, hence, they will still take uncontrolled rebirth.

Khenrinpoche: If one has ignorance, does it necessarily follow that one will take rebirth? **Student 3:** Not necessarily so, but it could happen.

Khenrinpoche: Then you still have to answer why does the ordinary bodhisattvas still take rebirth due to karma and afflictions.

Student 3: They still have craving and grasping. So at the time of death, craving and grasping could still occur to ripen previous karma they have created to take rebirth in samsara.

Khenrinpoche: What's the reason for them having craving and grasping? **Student 3:** Because they have not overcome craving and grasping. **Khenrinpoche:** Then you are not answering the question but repeating the same thing.

Student 3: I thought they still have dependent-links? **Khenrinpoche:** Why do you think they have? **Student 3:** Because they still have the apprehension of true existence, due to which, they can still develop craving and grasping.

Khenrinpoche: You are essentially saying that, because he has apprehension of true existence, therefore, he has craving and grasping. **Student 3:** Yes. **Khenrinpoche:** Is that a correct reason? **Student 3:** I don't know, but I thought that's the reason. **Khenrinpoche:** There is no pervasion. When one has apprehension of true existence, does one necessarily have craving and grasping? **Student 3:** Not necessarily. **Khenrinpoche:** So if you say that it is not necessary, then you cannot say that because there is apprehension of true existence then one has craving and grasping.

Khenrinpoche: Are the rest getting what I am saying? You must listen to what he says and what I am saying. This is [an aspect] of learning how to ask question. Even though with one [reply] you must not just stop there. The question that he posed is that, on one hand the bodhisattvas have renunciation with samsara, yet on the other hand, ordinary bodhisattvas take rebirths in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions. So is there a contradiction? If there isn't, then how do you explain so?

Student 3: Even though they are disenchanted with samsara, but some ordinary bodhisattvas still have previous karma they have created to be born in samsara. Then because they still have craving and grasping, that's why all such karmas can still ripen for them to take rebirth in samsara. **Khenrinpoche:** It is quite okay [to say they have previous karma]. But why do these ordinary bodhisattvas have craving and grasping?

Student 3: Because before that they have feeling. Before feeling they have contact. Before contact they have six sources. Before six sources they have name and form. Before that they have consciousness, before that they karma, before that they have ignorance. Ignorance come from apprehension of true existence.

Khenrinpoche: Since these ordinary bodhisattvas have attained a path, they necessarily have generated renunciation. But due to many projecting karma accumulated previously which they have not abandoned, they have no choice and control but to take rebirths in cyclic existence due to the force of such previously accumulated projecting karma.

Khenrinpoche: Is there craving and grasping in the continuum of someone who has realized emptiness directly? **Student 4:** Yes. On the second ground, they still have not abandoned the afflictions. On the pure grounds, they would not have craving and grasping. Because they have abandoned the afflictions.

Khenrinpoche: If there is apprehension of true existence, does one also necessarily possess craving and grasping? **Student 4:** Not necessarily. **Khenrinpoche:** Posit an illustration.

Student 4: Ten ground bodhisattvas. **Khenrinpoche:** Does the bodhisattvas on the tenth ground possess the apprehension of true existence? **Student 4:** No. **Khenrinpoche:** Then why do you posit that as an illustration of someone who has apprehension of true existence but not necessarily having craving and grasping? Therefore, there is no need to mention [such an example] because tenth ground bodhisattvas do not have apprehension of true existence.

Student 4: I thought it was appearance of true existence. If it is apprehension of true existence, then it is necessarily [the case that they possess craving and grasping]. An example would be myself.

Khenrinpoche: If there is craving and grasping, you will definitely take rebirth in cyclic existence, isn't it? **Student 4:** Yes. **Khenrinpoche:** Do bodhisattva superiors take rebirth in cyclic existence due to karmic seed that is nourished by craving and grasping. **Student 4:** Which ground? **Khenrinpoche:** You can choose seventh ground. **Student 4:** Yes, he still would have to take rebirth due to craving and grasping.

Khenrinpoche: Isn't there the fallacy of the bodhisattva superior taking rebirth due to karma and afflictions? **Student 4:** It is only on the eighth ground that he achieves liberation. Therefore, on the seventh, he still has afflictions.

Khenrinpoche: So you are saying that, bodhisattva superiors on the first, second and third ground, for example, take rebirth in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions? **Student 4:** Have to say that.

Khenrinpoche: If that is the case, then such bodhisattva superiors cannot possess mental bodies. **Student 4:** No. **Khenrinpoche:** In essence, you say that such bodhisattva superiors on the first or second grounds do not have mental bodies. So they will have contaminated bodies. So they will have true sufferings. Then the bodies of such bodhisattva superiors would then be true suffering. **Student 4:** Have to say yes.

Khenrinpoche: [Student 4] is saying that, from the first to the seventh ground, the bodhisattva's body is still the same as our bodies, no different, there is still true suffering.

Student 5: I disagree. It would mean that they would still possess the twelve links of the class of afflictions. This means that, as they are progressing on the path to abandon the twelve links, at the same time, they are still producing the twelve links. This means that, they would never be able to be freed from the twelve links.

Khenrinpoche: You are not really answering what he is saying. He is only saying that they take rebirth due to twelve links but he is not saying that they are producing new karma.

Student 5: This would mean that they would not have the direct realization of emptiness to stop that production.

Khenrinpoche: He is not saying they are creating new karma, he already knows that. He is saying that bodhisattva superiors still take rebirth in samsara due to karma and afflictions.

Student 5: They will have the direct realization of emptiness which will not further accumulate the class of twelve links that is the class of afflictions. **Khenrinpoche:** He accepts that. **Student 5:** This means that he will not be producing those twelve links and he will also not be taking rebirths due to those twelve links. This is because, he has the direct realization of emptiness, which is powerful enough to stop the projecting karma from manifesting or ripening.

Khenrinpoche: Are you saying that, once you realize emptiness directly, you will not take rebirth in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions. **Student 5:** Yes. **Khenrinpoche:** You are essentially saying that, once you realize emptiness directly, you necessarily do not have craving and grasping of the twelve links. **Student 5:** Yes. Therefore, they have the mental bodies which are produced by the twelve links of the class of knowledge obscurations due to [levels of] predispositions [of ignorance] and so forth.

Khenrinpoche: What [student 4] was saying that, even though you realized emptiness directly, you still have craving and grasping. Hence, they still take rebirth in cyclic existence essentially due to karma and afflictions. Whereas your position is the complete opposite.

Student 5: Even though they may have the ignorance as well as its imprints in their continua, but they do not newly produce such sets of twelve links any more.

Khenrinpoche: The basis of debate is not that. What you are saying is: once you realize emptiness directly, you do not have craving and grasping and therefore one would not take rebirth due to craving and grasping. Then what [both students 4 and 5] are saying are wrong.

Student 2: Examples of someone who directly realizes emptiness but still have craving and grasping are Stream-enterers and Once-returners who needs to take rebirth in desire realm. **Khenrinpoche:** Good. Then what about [what student 4] is saying?

Student 2: Since you say that [the bodies of the] first to seventh ground is also true suffering, then do you accept that the first ground bodhisattvas can manifest a hundred bodies, and the second ground can manifest many more? Does that mean that they manifest more true suffering? **Khenrinpoche:** Good. He is saying that, when you reach the first ground, [however many] bodies they manifest, they would manifest that many suffering bodies?

Student 4: They may have suffering but their aim is to help others. My thesis is that, before they reach the pure ground, they still have ignorance. **Khenrinpoche:** We accept that, there's no question. Nobody is debating about that. The qualm is, when you reach the first ground, you are producing suffering bodies, then on the second ground, it is doubled. **Student 4:** There is no pervasion. This is because, when the bodhisattva is born in hell, that does not mean that he will suffer in hell.

Khenrinpoche: The bodhisattva emanates and goes to hell but does not suffer. Then it follows that, essentially the [superior] bodhisattva's body is not true suffering, isn't it? It is mentioned in the teachings on the perfection of generosity in that, ordinary bodhisattvas are not allowed to give their bodies away. Once one becomes a bodhisattva superior, then one can do so. It is said that, the more they give, the more happiness they achieve with additional pieces of their bodies that they give, they get that much more happiness. This proves that their bodies are not true suffering.

Student 4: It proves that they have more compassion for others. When they [cut themselves to give their bodies away], they will not feel the suffering. That means, in their mental continua, they don't feel pain. This is because, their aim is to help others.

Khenrinpoche: The supreme mundane quality of the path of preparation is that which immediately precedes the attainment of the path of seeing. One progresses onto the path of seeing from this level of the path of preparation in one meditative equipoise. What is the difference between the body of the bodhisattva on former level and the latter level?

Student 4: It is still the same [true suffering] body. **Khenrinpoche:** If it is the same body, then what happens to the same body up to enlightenment and after enlightenment? **Student 4:** You cannot rely on the sutra path alone to gain enlightenment. **Khenrinpoche:** What about the last moment on the seventh ground and the first moment on the eighth ground. [You have asserted earlier that it is a mental body on the eighth ground], so it is still the same body? **Student 4:** No.

Khenrinpoche: Okay...anyway, there is a verse which I think may have its source in *Maitreya's Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras*, which says that the bodhisattva superiors do not have sufferings of sickness, aging and death. This means that, bodhisattva superiors do not have true suffering. Once the first ground is achieved, that bodhisattva superior acquires a mental body and do not possess true suffering. Hence, when they give away their bodies, they do not feel pain.

Student 6: Is the mental body the same as the illusory body?

Khenrinpoche: No, they are not the same. The achievement of the illusory body has to be preceded by actualizing clear light. This is because, it is from within the clear light that one arises as the illusory body. Such a presentation of clear light and illusory body are not found in [the teachings of] sutra. There is not even the presentation of the extremely subtle mind. Yet, it is difficult for one to imagine what exactly a mental body is.

This is a qualm from the previous module: What is the substantial cause of the mental body? According to sutra, that which are posited as the cause of the two bodies, the truth and form body, is essentially the collection of wisdom resulting in the truth body, and the collection of merit resulting in the form body. There is not a better explanation than that.

The explanation according to highest yoga tantra is much more profound than that. Essentially:

- 1) The substantial cause of the **Truth Body** is the extremely subtle mind while its cooperative condition is the extremely subtle wind.
- 2) The substantial cause for the **Form Body** is the extremely subtle wind while its cooperative condition is the extremely subtle mind. [These two are] of one entity. If one thinks about it, such an explanation makes more sense.

According to sutra, the substantial cause for the Form Body is the collection of merit. They do not have a better explanation than that.

To answer the question as to the substantial cause for the mental body, it is not stated obviously in the text, but if one were to base on the sutric explanation of the substantial cause of the Form Body and extend on that, then perhaps it is the powerful accumulation of the collection of merit of the bodhisattva on the path of preparation. This acts as the cause for the mental body of the first ground.

Can the bodhisattva superior's mental bodies be seen? Does it look like ours? **Student 6:** Perhaps they are similar to the intermediate state being's energy bodies. We cannot see them. But they probably possess both bodies. Like when someone who achieves the illusory body, he does not lose his own body.

Student 1: Since the accumulation of merit on the path of preparation is the substantial cause of the mental body of the bodhisattva on the first ground, would that not be a contaminated cause, since it is not conjoined with the wisdom directly realizing emptiness? How can something accumulated from an ordinary being be a cause for something that is a mental body of a superior?

Verse 28:

<p><i>28 When my intellect is blind toward all that is worth knowing, It is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for claiming as the Dharma what ought to be put aside. From now on I shall cultivate the wisdom that comes from study, examination, and meditation.</i></p>
<p>When one hears the teachings but does not remember the words, one reflects on the teachings but does not understand the meaning, one meditates but does not get any realizations, one may then feel that one is not so intelligent and wise when compared to others.</p>
<p>Even siblings do not necessarily have the same level of intelligence. There may be a group of siblings who share the same parents, but somehow there can be some who are more intelligent than others.</p>
<p>In <i>Dharmakirti's Pramanavarttika (Commentary on Dignaga's 'Compendium of Valid Cognition')</i>, he says that the parent's egg and sperm are not the substantial cause of one's consciousness. If these were, then it would follow that siblings would have the same level of intelligence and mental characteristics.</p>
<p>Since that is the case, then one has to posit the substantial cause to be a former moment of consciousness. This is how one establishes past and future lives.</p>
<p>It is quite evident that siblings do not have the same level of intelligence and mental characteristics. Hence, everyone is different. Hence, sometimes one may wonder why one is not intelligent and smart like somebody else.</p>
<p>The Buddhist explanation is that, it is basically due to karma. This is because, one did not create the cause in the past.</p>
<p>It could be that, in one's past lives, one only engaged in non-dharma activities, entertaining non-dharmic thoughts and so forth. Even if one did meet with the Dharma in past lives, one did not take the opportunity to learn nor cherish it, thinking that it was something that could be set aside [for later].</p>
<p>This is the reason why at the present, when one hears the teachings, one does not remember the words. When one reflects on it, one does not understand the meaning. When one attempts to internalize it, one does not gain any realizations.</p>
<p>If in one's present life one finds one is also in this situation where one does not understand the teachings no matter what one does, then one has to understand that, this is a result of certain causes and conditions.</p>
<p>These are essentially not having heard nor reflected on the teachings in one's previous lives.</p>
<p>One should remind oneself that, if one does not put in effort in this life to work hard at learning and reflecting on the teachings, then in one's future lives, it will not be any better on its own. In fact, one may end up even more dull-witted.</p>
<p>Hence, not being able to understand the teachings in this life should not be a reason to stop learning. In fact, it should be the reason for one to work even harder to strive, learn, think about [the teachings] and place positive impressions in one's mind.</p>
<p>Therefore the advice here is that, through hearing, reflecting and meditating, one strives to respectively generate the wisdom arisen from hearing, reflection and meditation.</p>
<p>Everyone makes the same mistake in that, whenever one does not understand any of the teachings, one merely gives up. This is a huge mistake. This is because, it does not mean that if one gives up, the situation will get better on its own. It is not possible that the situation will improve. In fact, one may become even more dull.</p>
<p>There is always something that one would not understand. This should not be the reason for one to stop striving. One has to work hard and put in the effort to learn and reflect. It is only [with such causes that,] the situation will get better in one's future lives. If one does not do anything about it, the situation will not get better, there is no way for progress.</p>
<p>If one works hard and strive, then it is definite that one will make some progress in this life. If there is progress in this life, then there is really hope for the future lives [for the situation] to be better. But if one were to stop and give up, then definitely there will not be any progress in this life. If that is the case, then how can there be progress in the future lives?</p>

Such pieces of advice are really very helpful. What the verses have been saying so far are essentially advising one to reflect on one's own karma and hence take responsibility for its results.

Whenever the situation becomes more difficult no matter what one does, then the advice here is to reflect on karma and its effects, to keep on going and work hard.

Verse 29:

29 When I am overcome by sleep while practicing Dharma, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for piling up obscurations to the holy Dharma. From now on I shall undergo hardship for the sake of the Dharma.

Sometimes when one attends prayers or pujas, before that one is not sleepy, but ten or fifteen minutes into the session, one suddenly just feels uncontrollably sleepy.

Or, before doing one's daily recitation or prayer one may be wide awake, but once one starts the prayers one feels very sleepy. Or when one goes to class and listens to the teachings, one may also feel sleepy. However, somehow one does not feel sleepy when one is watching a movie.

This happens to one. No matter how hard one tries to stay awake, one is uncontrollably overwhelmed by sleep. This is due to the force of one's obscurations.

This is said to be the karmic result of having accumulated negativities and obscurations in relation to the holy Dharma. For example, one does not show proper respect to Dharma texts, putting them on bare ground or low place, walking over them, placing other materials on them, not regarding them with reverence and respect, but seeing them as mere articles.

There is also the accumulation of negativities in relation to the realizational Dharma. This happens when one criticizes, despises or belittle someone who possesses the realizational Dharma in his mental continuum.

From now on I shall undergo hardship for the sake of the Dharma: From now on, one will not disrespect Dharma texts, belittle, revile nor criticize someone who possesses the realizational Dharma in his mind.

Verse 30:

30 When I delight in the afflictions and am greatly distracted, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for not meditating upon impermanence and the shortcomings of cyclic existence. From now on I shall increase my dissatisfaction for cyclic existence.

'Delight' here can mean the mind of attachment that is only preoccupied and involved in acquiring material wealth, power, reputation, followers motivated by and taking delight in attachment.

It can also mean delighting in anger. There are some who seem to 'enjoy' despising and deprecating others and so forth.

There can also be *delighting* in ignorance. Perhaps this could mean being very fond of and greatly enjoying sleep.

Greatly distracted means that one has no mental space for Dharma. One's emphasis, goal and philosophy in life at all times is merely focusing on the affairs and happiness of this life. One does not have any mental space nor time to practice Dharma.

The text says that, when one takes delight in the afflictions, being greatly distracted with total preoccupation in the affairs of this life, thinking that it is of the utmost importance, then this is the result of not having thought or reflected on death and impermanence, as well as the faults of cyclic existence in one's past lives.

The solution is that, from now on, one has to increase one's dissatisfaction for cyclic existence. One has to strengthen one's renunciation for cyclic existence through thinking about impermanence and the faults of cyclic existence.

Reflecting and meditating well on the faults of cyclic existence are extremely important, it is particularly critical for beginners. Although the meditation on impermanence itself will not eliminate one's anger and attachment completely, but it is very effective in reducing their strength and power.

Above this, if one can reflect on the faults of cyclic existence, then of course it is even more beneficial as it is very effective and helpful in reducing the power and strength of one's afflictions.

Since it is so extremely important, one should [focus] on and not belittle these practices, [thinking these are not important].

Discussion on what transforms in entity to the mind directly realizing emptiness:

Student 1: Is it possible for a mind realizing emptiness through a mental image be transformed into a mind that realizes emptiness directly?

Khenrinpoche: There are ordinary beings who realize emptiness, but they do not realize emptiness directly. From the teachings of Minds and mental factors, among the different types of awarenesses/ consciousnesses, there are wrong consciousness and doubt. The latter itself is divided into three: the doubt tending towards the non-factual, equal doubt and doubt tending towards the fact. Then there are the correctly assuming consciousness, inferential cognizer and finally direct perceiver. These were covered [in Module two].

How the mind can transform in entity from a wrong consciousness to a direct perceiver:

One may initially have wrong/ perverse consciousness with regards to the ultimate nature of reality, denying the existence of emptiness. But when one hears the teachings on emptiness, the strong believe in the non-existence of emptiness may perhaps be weaken a bit. However one still has doubt, but such a doubt is not as strong as a wrong consciousness. One then proceeds from a doubt tending towards the non-factual to having equal doubt. One is then a little more open [with equal doubts towards both the factual and non-factual]. With more hearing and reflection, one may then tend towards the possibility of emptiness. Even though one may still be indecisive [about emptiness], but at least one is tending towards [the existence of] emptiness of inherent existence. With more hearing and reflection, one may arrive at a strong believe that [phenomena being empty of inherent existence] has to be the case and nothing else. Even though it is a strong believe, but it is not an ascertainment yet [hence it is merely a correct assumption]. Eventually, when one understands and realizes emptiness via a correct reason, in dependence upon such correct reason or reasons, one then realizes the object, emptiness itself. Such a mind is called an inferential cognizer realizing emptiness which is a conceptual mind. After realizing emptiness through a correct reason or reasons, which is an inferential cognition of emptiness, one just has to familiarize oneself repeatedly with such a meaning. It is said that eventually, such an understanding/ realization will be transformed into a direct perception. On the path of accumulation and the path of preparation, one primarily meditates on emptiness. But such a meditation/ realization of emptiness is always involved with the meaning generality of emptiness.

When one considers this question, the point is how does one explain with regards to emptiness, the transformation of a doubt into correct belief? Can there be a transformation? Likewise, how does one proceed from correct belief to an inferential cognition. Then with regards to an inferential cognition of the object of emptiness, can such a mind transform in entity into a direct perception? When one really thinks about this, this is actually rather difficult to conceive/ understand.

From the sutric perspective, with regards to the minds that move to enlightenment, there are no other explanations other than saying that conceptual minds can transform in entity into direct perception. During the time of being a sentient being, the are conceptualities. [Some] of these transform into direct perception.

But from the perspective of tantra, it is a little easier to explain. Beginning with the mind that moves from life-to-life, it is actually the extremely subtle mind that moves at the time of death to the next life. It is also the extremely subtle mind that moves to enlightenment. All the coarser levels of consciousnesses cease to exist before enlightenment can occur.

Hence, if one were to examine this from the perspective of sutra, one has to say that, through repeated familiarization over a period of time, one's conceptual mind realizing emptiness, for example, can transform in entity into a direct perception of emptiness.

Khenrinpoche: Is this not the case? Does one not end up saying this as there is no other way?

Student 1: It seems like on one hand there is only one entity through the means of transformation from inference to direct perception, yet on the other, it seems that these two are different minds.

Khenrinpoche: Inferential cognition of emptiness and the direct perception of emptiness are necessarily different as these are different minds. One is thought while the other is a direct perception. There is therefore nothing difficult about this point, these are necessarily two different minds. However, that is not your question. The question is: **does the inferential cognition of emptiness itself transforms in entity into a direct perception or not?** Therefore, the main question is about the mind realizing emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation, such a mind is necessarily conceptual. Through repeated familiarization, it is said that he will eventually see emptiness directly and hence enter the path of seeing. The basic question then is that, does the inferential cognition of emptiness in such a person's mental continuum transform in entity to a direct perceiver?

Choosing the better of the two options, which are exhaustive:

If one says no, then there is only one other option, which is that, to achieve the path of seeing, one has to generate a completely different mind that realizes emptiness directly. Therefore, it is very clear that there are only these two options. Perhaps the better option would be the first [answer]. One probably has to say that, it is the inferential cognition realizing emptiness *itself* which transforms into a direct perceiver.

Refuting that the first moment of direct perception is a new phenomenon:

If one says that such a mind does not transform into a direct perceiver upon entering the path of seeing, then one has to say that the mind directly perceiving emptiness is newly arisen. If that is the case, then what is its immediate prior moment to the arising of such a direct perception? Such an immediate prior moment is essentially a mind in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation. Such a mind has to be the substantial cause that becomes a direct perceiver. Then does such a mind realize emptiness? If one says yes, then the next question would be, is such a former moment of mind realizing emptiness a direct perceiver or not?

If one takes the first position that, it is the inferential cognizer realizing emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation that transforms into the direct perception of emptiness upon achieving the path of seeing, then such a position will have less complication.

Stating the absurd consequences that the inferential cognizer realizing emptiness does not cease at the time of achieving the path of seeing:

One has to say that, the inferential cognition that realizes emptiness which is essentially conceptual thought, either ceases at the time of achieving the path of seeing, or it does not. If not, then it will have to continue as a conceptual thought on the path of seeing and the path of meditation. Then all such realizations of emptiness will have to be conceptual thoughts. One can even take it all the way up to the end of the path of meditation, the mind realizing emptiness at the last moment as a sentient being will also have to be a conceptual thought as well. If that is the case, then does the continuum of such a conceptual thought realizing emptiness in the continuum of one who is in the final moment as a sentient being go to enlightenment? Therefore, one has to account for all such questions.

Further, is the inferential cognition realizing emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation a Buddha lineage? Is it Buddha lineage?

Therefore, this is what one needs to do with such great treatises. If one does not think about them, [then there is nothing much to talk about,] but if one thinks about them, then there are so many things to think about. One then ends up with a lot of unanswered qualms. Having many qualms, even though these may be unanswered, is not bad at all. In fact, it is very good. It is not good at all to not have any qualms. If one is a Buddha, then one does not need such qualms, otherwise, one needs them.

Therefore, the essence of the answer is that,

The inferential cognizer realizing emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation transforms in entity into a direct perceiver when he realizes emptiness directly.

Khenrinpoche: What difficulties do you face when you take this to be the answer?

Student 2: If one takes this answer, then what happens to the meaning generality? **Khenrinpoche:** The mental image disappears. There can only be a meaning generality if a conceptual thought is involved. If conceptuality does not exist, then one cannot talk about a meaning generality.

Student 1: If it is a consciousness, it is necessarily a product which comes from a continuum of a similar type. [Since the conceptual realization of emptiness and the wisdom directly realizing emptiness are two different minds, then would there be a contradiction?]

Khenrinpoche: These are definitely different minds. [However,] *there is the continuity of similarity*. In fact, there is the most important similarity as these [two minds] realize emptiness.

Student 3: What is the difference between the mind element and the mental consciousness element mentioned in the Heart Sutra?

Khenrinpoche: If a consciousness is divided into two, it can be either a sense or a mental consciousness. The mental consciousness is mental main mind. Perhaps the difference is that, mind constituent/ mind element would probably refer to the mental primary consciousness, whereas the mental consciousness element would include both main minds and mental factors.

In general, how the direct perception of emptiness is the same continuum as the wrong consciousness of ignorance:

Student 4: With regards to the earlier qualm, if one were to go back [from the direct perceiver downwards], then one would have to say that the correctly assuming consciousness would be transformed into inferential cognizer. Then going back further, one has to say that ignorance actually transforms into wisdom.

Khenrinpoche: If one explains an inferential cognition can transform in entity into a direct perception of emptiness and then extend such an argument backwards, then such a question will arise. Is the inferential cognition of emptiness of the same continuum as the correct belief focusing on emptiness? Is such a correct belief also a continuation essentially of doubt? Is doubt essentially a continuation of wrong consciousness?

If one thinks about this, one can say that, through listening and reflecting by employing reasoning, one can argue that, a wrong consciousness *in general*, can become doubt. For example, the mind that decisively thinks that enlightenment and karma do not exist. This is a perverse consciousness. But based on some reason and thinking, one may then come to think that perhaps karma does exist and changes one's view. Is such a doubt a continuation of the previous wrong consciousness? If one thinks about it, one may have to say that, *in general*, it is a continuation. Otherwise, again what option would one have? If one says that a wrong consciousness can transform in entity into doubt or even some [other minds], then what problems would there be?

In the Tathagata Essence module, there was a question about whether the emptiness of apprehension of true existence is Buddha lineage or not. If one accepts what has been said so far, that all such minds can be transformed, then one would probably be saying that, [the emptiness of the apprehension of true existence] is Buddha lineage. If that is the case, then it will follow that ignorance is Buddha lineage.

On the other hand, [why is it that] a wrong consciousness cannot change into something better like a doubt, which is much better than having wrong views? Would a wrong consciousness always [remain as a] wrong consciousness? It either changes into something else or it disappears. Can a wrong consciousness itself transform in entity and become a doubting consciousness?

So the question you have to answer is this: Can a wrong consciousness transform in entity into a doubting consciousness or not? If it is yes, then it follows that there is the continuation of the apprehension of true existence all the way to enlightenment. If that is the case, then it follows that the apprehension of true existence is Buddha lineage. Would that not make ignorance a Buddha lineage?

How it is easier to understand the 'transformation' according to the procedure in tantra:

Student 5: The conceptual mind realizes emptiness intellectually, but the subtle mind realizes emptiness directly. The conceptual mind envelops the subtle mind. When the conceptual mind arrives to the point where emptiness is ready to be realized directly, it [dissolves] and the subtle mind 'enters' into the continuum of realizing emptiness directly. Such a [dissolution] is what I call a transformation. Therefore, the conceptual mind transforms by [dissolving]. At the core, there is the subtle mind that reveals itself and 'enters' the continuum of realizing emptiness directly.

Khenrinpoche: What you said in general is the procedure according to tantra. Of course, if you take the position of tantra, it is easier to understand.

Verse 31:

<i>31 When things get worse no matter what I do, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for disparaging [karma and its effects]. From now on I shall strive to accumulate merit.</i>
When the situation gets worse no matter what one does, be it being in terms of one's practice not succeeding and even getting worse, or it could be one's career or business not being successful but getting worse.
It is said that this is just <i>the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for disparaging [karma and its effects]</i>
When the situation gets worse no matter what one does, it is the ripening effect of one's nonvirtues accumulated in the past. Due to not having believed in karma and its effects, one was not careful in living one's life according to the principles of karma. Hence, the solution to this is to accumulate merit.
In some texts it say <i>From now on I shall strive to accumulate merit.</i> There are other editions which say <i>From now on I shall strive to be patient.</i> Essentially, whatever happens, the point and solution is not to disparage karma but to strive to live one's life according to the principles of karma and its effects.
When one abides in and lives one's life according to the principles of karma and its effects, there will be challenges as it is not easy at times. Even if one does meet with difficulties in keeping up with one's principles and belief in karma, one has to bear with [the hardships that come with such practices].

Verse 32:

<i>32 When all the religious rites I perform go awry, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for looking to the dark quarter for help. From now on I shall turn away from the dark quarter.</i>
There are people who resort to religious rites or pujas when the situation goes bad, like meeting with obstacles or sicknesses and so forth. Sometimes even if the pujas are done, the situation does not improve. In fact, the situation may even get worse.

At such times it is very possible to develop wrong views thinking that [doing pujas] do not work/ have no efficacy. This depends very much on whether the person has faith and understanding of what Dharma is.
If one has faith in the Dharma, then it does not matter what the result of the puja is. Even if the pujas do not seem to be helpful in a particular situation, but due to having faith and understanding in the Dharma, one knows that once the cause is created, then it is only a matter of time that the result will occur. Even if it is not now, but it will definitely ripen in the future.
There are times when, despite having pujas done, the situation gets even worse. This is due to the force of nonvirtue behind one's bad experiences being stronger, hence it is ripening now. This makes it look like the pujas are useless or ineffective.
There are people who say that, despite sponsoring the pujas, instead of the problem going away, it gets bigger. They would then conclude that they are doing pujas to create more problems. Hence, they assign blame onto the pujas, thinking that it is the pujas that are causing more problems to them. This is actually not the case.
This is due to the strength of the nonvirtue being so powerful that, it is ripening in the form of more and more problems.
<i>When all the religious rites I perform go awry, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for looking to the dark quarter for help:</i> In the past, one has followed and listened to those whose advice are essentially non-dharma. One has [performed actions] that are in complete opposite to the Dharma.
Therefore, if one does not wish to experience such an outcome, then the solution is that, henceforth, one should turn away from the dark side, which means to not engage in non-dharma but perform actions that are in accordance with the Dharma.

Verse 33:

<i>33 When my prayers to the Three Jewels go unanswered, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for not believing in buddhahood. From now on I shall rely on the Three Jewels alone.</i>
Many people, motivated mainly by the concerns of the happiness of this life alone. Would make prayers to the Three Jewels to overcome some sicknesses, spirit harms, failures in careers or businesses. At times, their prayers may not materialize.
At such times, it is quite usual for them to think: "I've made strong prayers but nothing happens, then what is the use?" or "The Three Jewels do not have the power to grant my wishes." Hence, it is really possible to develop wrong views.
<i>Khenrinpoche:</i> Does the Buddha have the complete power to fulfill all the happiness of this life, free one from one's sickness and solve one's business problems?" Does 'Toa Pek Gong' have the power to fulfill the goals of this life?
What is so difficult about this question? Buddha can bring sentient beings to enlightenment, free them from samsara, but He cannot do small things? Buddha has the power to save and protect one from the sufferings of cyclic existence in general as well as the specific sufferings of the lower realms. This are the reasons one takes refuge.
You must have reasons to doubt, like [having experienced] pujas not working. Otherwise there is no reason to doubt.
It happens that, sometimes one's prayers to the Three Jewels concerning the affairs of this life may not materialize. When this happens, it is important not to develop wrong view thinking that: "Buddha is useless as he cannot help me."
When this happens, the explanation for this is that, in the past, one lacked the real conviction in having single-pointed trust in the Three Jewels. Or it could be that, either in the past lives or in this life, one did not really believe in what the Buddha said. One lacked the faith of conviction, trust and believe in Buddha's speech/ words.
It is said that, it does not matter what is happening to one's life, whether it is good or bad, one should completely entrust oneself to the Three Jewels.
When one examines what refuge really is, it is essentially a faith of conviction in the Three Jewels' ability to protect oneself from the [the sufferings of] the lower realms and the entire samsara.
To generate such a mind of refuge, there must be two causes, one of which is the faith of conviction in their ability to protect one from whatever level of suffering one is concerned with. Such a faith is extremely important. If one has such a faith, it is <i>definite</i> that they can protect one. Then this begets the question: "As one is still in cyclic existence, how is that so?"
If one has not thought about it, then this is not that straightforward. Does one not think that this is a very important question?
Is it not crucial to know that, that which will <i>definitely</i> save one from the lower realms is this supposed entrusting and faith in the Buddha's power and ability to protect one from the lower realms?
<i>Khenrinpoche:</i> We stop here, you think about this and give the answer next time. I will ask this question again.

Verse 34:

<i>34 When [negative concept] rises up as pollution demons and evil spirits, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for sinning against the [deities] and mantras. From now on I shall crush all [negative concepts].</i>
Sometimes when one experiences harms from an external spirit, this could be due to transgressing one's vows and samayas. Due to such a transgression, there appears such an external spirit which causes harm.
Whatever the specific karmic cause might be, essentially and in general, the main cause of receiving harms and so forth is one's own afflictions.
There is a verse, which may be from Lama Atisha, that says: <i>"If your mind is subdued, the external spirit cannot harm you. But if your mind is not subdued, then such an external spirit acts as a condition for your own mind to be burned."</i>
What this verse means is that: Due to the degeneration of one's vows and samayas, such a negativity arises in the form of external source of harm as a non-human entity of a spirit, which then causes one problems.
Such an experience is due to having sinned against the deities and gods in the past. Deities here could be a worldly or a transcendental deity, whatever it may be, one may have despised, criticized and put them down in the past.
Sinning against mantra: when <i>mantra</i> is translated into Tibetan, it literally means <i>protecting the mind</i> . Perhaps here, it can mean protecting the mind from nonvirtue.
The entire Dharma can be condensed into the practice of the path of the three types of persons, the paths of the persons of small, middling and great capacities. Whatever Dharma it may be, starting from the Dharma of the person of small capacity, it is that which protects one's mind from nonvirtuous states.
Reviling, criticizing, despising, disregarding and putting down such a Dharma will lead to the accumulation of negativities which will then ripen in the form of external source of harm like spirit harm which causes one problems.
Therefore, <i>from now on I shall crush all negative concepts</i> . One should do one's best to reduce those thoughts that do not accord with the Dharma. One undertakes an oath/ pledge to vanquish such negative thoughts.
One can have all sorts of negative discursive thoughts that arise from one's anger and attachment which themselves are induced by ignorance. All such non-beneficial negative thoughts are those one should try to overcome.

Verse 35:

<i>35 When I wander far from home like a helpless person, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for driving spiritual teachers and others from their homes. From now on I shall not expel anyone from their home.</i>
This verse gives the example of being expelled from a place. Sometimes, one may be living in a pleasant environment but somehow another person who is more powerful comes along and forces one to leave one's home.
It could also be someone at work who is more powerful that comes along and removes one from one's job. One may also be part of a committee or organization, then someone who is more powerful comes along and expels one from the committee or the organization. All such experiences causes one to suffer.
If one is a Buddhist, then the way to think when one encounters such situations is to remember karma in that, whatever one experiences, these are the results of one's own actions. It is therefore not to look for the source of the problems and assign blame externally. This is the approach of a Buddhist, to experience the situation without getting disturbed or upset.
Essentially, one is making peace in one's heart. Such a way to think is the best way.
If one were to ask what sort of karma one had accumulated to experience such a situation, then the teachings say that this is the result of having expelled and drove others from their homes.
The example of one's own spiritual teacher is just an example. One could have expelled anyone from their abodes motivated by anger, jealousy or competitiveness and so forth.
If one does not wish to experience such situations in the future, then the solution is to henceforth avoid expelling anyone from their homes, communities and so forth motivated by anger, jealousy or competitiveness, especially when one has the power and authority to do so.

Verses 36 & 37:

<i>36 When calamities occur like frost and hail, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for not properly guarding my vows and moral conduct. From now on I shall keep my vows and moral conduct pure.</i>
<i>37 When I, a greedy person, lose my wealth, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for not giving charity or making offerings to the Three Jewels. From now on I will [strive to] make offerings and give charity.</i>

<p>It happens to people generally that, when they are looking for material gains or profits, they would work very hard and do all sorts of things, putting in all their money, time, effort and so forth. Despite this, they still do not meet with success. Not only that, they may even lose whatever they have invested and end up with nothing. Such situations do occur.</p>
<p>Of course, when one experiences such situations, one would be very upset. There is the experience of problems, sufferings and unhappiness. At such times, it is important to recall karma thinking: “This is the result of my own karma.”</p>
<p>In this text, this is specifically due to not having practiced giving in the past nor having made offerings to the Three Jewels.</p>
<p>Not meeting with success in one's work, business, career, making profits and so forth are said to be the result of having been tightfisted and miserly in the past. Even though one had resources, but one did not practice giving/ offer to the Three Jewels.</p>
<p>If one does not wish to experience such similar problems in the future, then the solution is to practice giving and make offerings to the Three Jewels.</p>
<p>It is clearly mentioned in the <i>Stages of the Path literature</i> that, having perfect resources, body, entourage and abode are the results of having practiced generosity, joyous perseverance, ethical discipline and patience in the past.</p>
<p>However, having such results themselves alone are insufficient, if one has some kind concentration and more importantly, wisdom, then having these four results could be useful and beneficial.</p>
<p>If one lacks some concentration and particularly, some wisdom, then merely having money, helpers, pleasant physical appearance and environment does not necessarily mean that one would be happy.</p>
<p>This is because, such things that one possesses could actually be the condition for one to get more afflicted and for negative emotions to arise. Hence, having these good results without concentration and particularly without wisdom is not sufficient.</p>
<p>If one does not have wisdom that enables one to discriminate between what is good and bad, right from wrong, harmful and beneficial, particularly, if one does not have the wisdom that understands karma and its effects, then even though one may be rich, one would merely [squander away] one's merit.</p>
<p>This is because, whatever enjoyments one partakes in, one is merely depleting and exhausting them. At the same time, one is also not accumulating merit. This is what happens if one lacks wisdom. Also, having these enjoyments can actually become a cause for one to be more emotional, stirring up more attachment, anger and ignorance.</p>
<p>But if one has wisdom, particularly that understands karma and its effects, then just as one has wealth and prosperity now, one understands that one also needs to do something to ensure in the future, one can continue to have wealth and prosperity.</p>
<p>If one has the wisdom that understands karma, then one would do something to create the cause to experience wealth and prosperity in the future. One would then happily practice giving and make offerings to the Three Jewels.</p>
<p>Such an explanation from the <i>Stages of the Path to Enlightenment</i>, the section from the <i>Lam Rim Chen Mo</i> that introduces the Six Perfections, is a very good advice. One should get acquainted with them and analyze them.</p>
<p>In the Tibetan text, it says <i>From now on I will [strive to] make offerings and give charity purely</i>. This shows mainly the <i>purity of the intention</i>. Whether one is giving or making offerings, this has to be done sincerely with a pure motivation.</p>
<p>Although if one wishes wealth and prosperity, one needs to practice giving and make offerings, but this does not mean that one does so carelessly. One must do so with the purity of intention, this means that one does not do so motivated by bias, seeking fame, power, reputation and so forth, expecting something in return. Hence, it is important to do so purely.</p>
<p>If one examines the practice of the bodhisattvas, it is mentioned that they should do so without expecting anything in return. They do not even expect to experience the [positive] ripening effects of giving [in future lives].</p>
<p>Even though making offerings to the Three Jewels and practicing giving without hopes of rewards or even its positive ripening effects are the practices of the bodhisattva, but this does not mean that there is anything wrong when seeking for future lives' happiness, this is still alright and good. Even if one seeks wealth in the future lives, this is still alright.</p>
<p>But if it is a practice of a bodhisattva, then they give without the slightest expectation.</p>
<p>In the Buddha's teachings, there are a lot of discussion about karma, the benefits of giving, the practices of ethical discipline and so forth. For example, <i>from giving comes resources and from ethical discipline comes good rebirths</i>. Such theoretical teachings are widely explained in details.</p>
<p>But if one were to examine the reality in the world, generally within the Buddhist communities, when it comes to extending practical assistance to society like helping the poor, constructing schools and so forth, one generally does not do as well.</p>
<p>Although one says a lot about these, but in action, one pales in comparison to the followers of the other religious traditions.</p>
<p>One has to think, if one has enough resources to give, then one should think about helping others. When referring to giving, the practice of giving is essentially to the underprivileged, the destitute and the poor.</p>
<p>The advice here is that, one should practice giving and make offerings purely, one should not merely do so carelessly. As much as possible, within one's own abilities and situations, one should implement this practice.</p>

Verse 38:

*38 When my companions mistreat me for being ugly,
it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for erecting ugly images [and venting my rage in relation to them].
From now on I shall erect images of the [deities] and be slow to anger.*

One of the eight fruitional/ fully ripened effects mentioned in the *Lam Rim* is having a good physical appearance. In the context of benefiting sentient beings, such qualities can be useful.

This is because, by merely having a pleasant appearance, others are attracted. It then becomes easier to benefit them.

It is stated clearly in the *Stages of the Path* literature that, if one acquires a special body of high status that possesses the eight special qualities of the fruitional effects, then this will make a big difference to one's progress on the path to enlightenment.

These eight qualities are: [consummate life span, consummate color, consummate lineage, consummate power, trustworthy words, renown as a great power, being a male and having strength *LRCM page 243.*]

Khenrinpoche: What kind of karma does one need to be born as a male? One will find in many sutras stating the advantages of having a male body. For example, one can achieve the path of seeing based on a male body.

Long time ago, maybe fourteen years ago, I went to a [Buddhist] seminar here. There were many speakers from the Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions. There was a discussion on whether females can attain enlightenment or not.

There was a monk from the Theravada tradition who said that one cannot attain enlightenment in a female body. Then Ven Tenzin Palmo, [who was present,] was against such an idea and stated that women can also attain enlightenment.

In tantra, it is mentioned that one can achieve enlightenment on the basis of a female body. One has to be aware that, in some situation, Buddha has taught one way, in another situation, the Buddha taught something differently.

One has to understand the Buddha's intent and purpose for saying different things at different times to different people.

Hence, in the teachings on the *Four Reliances*, one of it is to not rely on the provisional but on the definitive meanings.

To achieve a special body of high status that possesses the eight fully ripened qualities of the fruitional effects as mentioned, it is insufficient merely to keep the ethical discipline of refraining from the ten nonvirtues. There are many other karmas needed to be accumulated, such as reducing pride, practicing patience and so forth.

To achieve the quality of having a good body, which includes pleasant physical appearance, the cause is practicing patience. But it is mentioned in the *Lam Rim* that erecting or constructing holy objects like the statues of Buddha and making offering of garments to the statues are also causes for achieving a good pleasant body.

If one does make or commission a statue of Buddha or other holy objects, it is important to ensure it is done properly. It must be made properly with the proper proportions, dimensions, measurements and so forth. The final product should be appealing to others such that, when they look at it, they would be pleased.

If one achieves that, then this becomes a cause to have a good body in the future.

There is the practice of making *Tsa Tsas*, which are images of the Buddha using clay or plaster. My personal opinion is this: the amount is not the emphasis, it is the quality that is important. This is mainly due to the reasons already explained.

The quality should be the priority. It should be made well such that the final product is appealing to others that leaves a positive impression on them. With regards to the material, one should use the best materials according to one's ability,

If one examines this, erecting a holy object of Buddha using clay or plaster verses using gold, one gets more merit from gold. If one does it well, then merely doing one [object itself] can become a cause to obtain a good body in the future.

It is important to make holy objects properly with the proper measurements, dimensions and not miss anything. Sometimes when others make these objects, there can be an eye, hand or leg missing or be out of proportion. The deformities in the final product are said to be the causes to be born in the future with incomplete sense faculties, powers or missing body parts.

Hence, one has to be very careful. There are also people who disrespect holy objects like statues, Dharma texts and so forth due to anger. There are also those who even destroy the holy objects or burn Dharma texts motivated by anger or other afflictions. These are all causes to have bad bodies in the future as well.

One does see in society that, for people who are ugly, being not physically attractive tend to have more unpleasant experiences, with others making fun, jeering at or despising them. It is hence not pleasant to have such experiences.

The solution to all such problems is therefore, henceforth one should be careful when one is erecting holy objects. One should also be patient, slow to anger, which means not to be short-tempered.

There are people who are very short-tempered. It does not matter who they meet, almost immediately for whatever reasons, they would get upset easily. One should try not to be like that but be slow to anger.

Verse 39:

<p>39 When [attachment] and hate are stirred up no matter what I do, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for hardening my malevolent, evil mind. <i>Obstinacy, from now on I shall totally extirpate you!</i></p>
<p>Although one may be aware of the faults of being attached to one's and those who are on one's own side and the faults of anger towards those not on one's side, one may even try to stop such biased attitudes, but somehow, one does not succeed and experience difficulties in doing so.</p>
<p>It is said that such problems are the result of having come under the control of self-cherishing in the past.</p>
<p>Henceforth, by recognizing the source of the problem, one's self-cherishing, one undertakes the pledge to vanquish one's own self-cherishing.</p>

Qualms pertaining to the Tathagata Essence module:

1) Does the developmental lineage include the wisdom directly realizing emptiness, the cause for the Dharmakaya, and particularly, the cause for both the wisdom Truth Body and the Nature Body?

The wisdom directly realizing emptiness is the substantial cause of the Wisdom Truth Body, but it is not the cause for the natural purity that is the Nature Body. The emptiness of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness is that which becomes the natural purity that is the Nature Body.

2) Is the tathagata essence an extremely hidden phenomenon? If it is, then it cannot be proven but rather, one can only understand it based on the testimony of someone else.

The tathagata essence is not an extremely hidden phenomenon. This is because, it is essentially the emptiness of the mind. One can come to understand it initially through reason. For example, one can realize the emptiness of another person through the reason: "That person does not exist inherently, because he is a dependent-arising." By depending on this reason of dependent-arising, one comes to understand that the person does not exist inherently. Even though the tathagata essence is not an extremely hidden phenomenon, but it is also not a manifest or obvious phenomenon either. It is a slightly hidden phenomenon. Objects of knowledge can be divided into three: manifest, slightly and extremely hidden phenomenon. The tathagata essence is a slightly hidden phenomenon. Manifest/ evident/ obvious phenomenon are phenomenon that can be understood directly without the need for reasoning, such as the pillars or the flowers that one sees directly. One sees, understands and experiences these directly without the need to depend on any thinking or reasoning to realize that these are flowers or pillars. Phenomena that can be experienced directly without depending on reasons are called manifest phenomena. Slightly hidden phenomena are those objects that one cannot at least directly realize initially. One has to initially realize it through reasons. Emptiness of inherent existence and subtle impermanence are examples of slightly hidden phenomena. There are objects like the subtle presentation of karma and its effects being taught in the teachings such as, if one does this, one will get a particular result. This is an example of an extremely hidden phenomenon. One cannot understand nor prove it through reasons. One can only understand them based on testimony. Here, the mind that realizes an extremely hidden phenomenon is essentially an inferential cognition generated through belief. Although one can only understand and accept an extremely hidden phenomenon based on the testimony of someone else, here being based on scriptures, but this does not mean that one has to accept [it straightaway]. Even though ultimately one accepts it because it was mentioned in the scriptures, but there is a whole line of reasons that have to precede such an acceptance of the scriptures. Essentially, one has to subject the scriptures of the Buddha to the three kinds of analysis. If His words are not harmed by the three kinds of analysis, then one can accept the testimony of that scripture.

3) Are all the Buddhas the same? Are some more superior than others? If all Buddhas are the same, then why do we not see more Buddhas around?

All the Buddhas have the same qualities of abandonments and realizations.

4) When the defilements are completely eradicated, does the disintegratedness of the defilements still exist? If so, what function does it perform?

The factor of disintegratedness was mentioned before. This is an uncommon assertion of the Consequence Middle Way School in that, they assert that disintegratedness, the past of disintegration, is a composed phenomenon. This is something to think about as this topic is challenging.

Verse 40:

40 When none of my practices reach their goal, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for internalizing a pernicious view. From now on, whatever I do shall be solely for the sake of others.

In the course of one's practice, retreat etc., if these activities do not achieve their aims and goals, then it is said that such experiences are the results of having followed a bad or lower view, which refers to cherishing oneself and forsaking others.

The teachings tell one that, if one wishes for one's practices to fulfill its goal, then what one needs to do is to do the practice with the thought of benefiting others for their sake only and not for oneself.

Verse 41:

41 When I cannot control my own mind even though I engage in religious activity, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for concentrating on my own [emphasis of happiness] in the present life. From now on I shall concentrate on the desire for liberation.

The main purpose of engaging in virtue with one's body and speech is to subdue and discipline one's mind.

If one discovers that one is unable to discipline one's mind even though one may be engaging in virtue, that it is not improving and even degenerating, despite doing prostrations, making offerings and so forth, then this is the result of merely focusing on the happiness of the present life.

One may be engaging in virtue with one's body and speech, but these activities may be done primarily to achieve the happiness of this life, like obtaining respect, reputation and so forth, motivated by any of the eight worldly dharmas.

The solution is that, whenever one is engaging in virtuous practices like prostrations, making offerings, doing recitations and so forth, it is important to ensure that these activities are not contaminated by [the motivation of] the eight world concerns.

Rather, whatever virtuous activities of prostrations, making offerings, doing recitations etc. one may be engaging in, one should think that all these are for the sake of subduing one's mind, reducing one's afflictions and achieving liberation.

Therefore, it is emphasized in the teaching that, whenever one is engaging in any activities, especially when one is engaging in any virtuous practices, one must examine one's motivation and adjust them to ensure a proper virtuous motivation is present [before] one does the practice. This is very important.

Otherwise, even though one may think that one is engaging in virtue and doing something really virtuous, like doing *many* prostrations, reciting *many Om Mani Padme Hums* etc., but if one failed to check, examine and then adjust one's motivation accordingly, then all such practices may end up not contributing to the pacification/ subduing/ disciplining of one's mind.

Whatever practices that one does, one should at least adjust one's motivation by thinking/ wishing that:

“May this practice become a cause for subduing my mind.”

Verse 42:

42 When I despair as soon as I've sat down and reflected, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for shamelessly flitting about from one new friend [and from one] high status to another. From now on I shall be serious about my friendships with everyone.

The example cited in the commentary is this: There could be occasions where one may stay in retreat for any period, towards the end of it, one may reflect back on it and feel that nothing much had happened, one did not really do a satisfactory retreat.

One may even think that: “I have wasted my time, if I had known earlier [how this would turn out], I would not have done it.” One may regret in such ways.

Such examples do occur to the various aspects of one's life as well. Whatever these may be, one usually undertakes certain activities and when one reflects on it, one may regret having started it in the first place.

This is said to be the result of having been shamelessly flitting from one friend to another in the past.

Such a situation also applies to running after gurus. One sees something good in a prospective guru, gets very excited and forms a relationship with him and obtains certain instructions from him.

But after a month or so, one then gets bored and thinks that [he is] not so good anymore. One then sees another person and thinks that there is another guru who is better, one then forsakes the first guru and runs to the second.

However, the same situation happens again. After a while, one goes on to the next one and so forth.

From one high status to another refers to not practicing the Dharma according to one's level. When one engages in Dharma practice to subdue one's mind, one has to know where one's own level [of spiritual development] is and train accordingly.

Hence one has to train one's mind gradually, starting with the path of the person of small capacity, if this is one's level.
But if instead, one looks for all the high practices straightaway, like all the Mahayana practices and those secret Mantra/ Tantra practices, running after such practices that are not at one's level, [then one will experience what is stated here.]
Therefore, the solution is henceforth, before taking and relying on someone as one's guru, one has to check carefully. Once one has made the decision and taken on someone as one's guru, then one should ensure that one relies properly to the end.
This also applies to making friends and doing practices. Before doing so, one should check carefully. One also practices according to one's own level and not merely run after high practices that are essentially beyond one's current ability.
When it comes to hearing the teachings, learning and studying the Dharma, one must do so as extensively as possible. In fact, if one can study all the different aspects of the sutra and tantra, then that is good as one needs to know everything.
But when it comes to practice/ training the mind, one has to do so in a proper order, without jumping. Therefore, one cannot start straightaway with high level practices. One has to start from the beginning in accordance with the level of one's mind.
It is said that the practices of the three types of persons, the persons of small, middling and great capacities are the practices for any one person to achieve enlightenment. Hence, one has to train one's mind in the practices of a person of small capacity first to actualize that, before one moves on to train one's mind in the practices of the person of middling capacity.
It is only when one has [succeeded in that training and having] actualized that, would one move onto the practices for a person of great capacity. Hence, when it comes to practicing and training one's mind, there is no such thing as jumping.

Verse43:

<i>43 When I am deceived by others' cunning, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for increasing my selfishness, pride, and insatiable greed. From now on I shall markedly reduce all of them.</i>
In life, one sometimes would meet someone who would take advantage of one, who did succeed in cheating one due to their deceit and guile. Sometimes one thinks that one is very smart in that, no one will be able to take advantage of one. But nevertheless, it happen to everyone in that, one gets cheated, deceived and taken advantage of in many different ways.
When this happens, one does not feel good but unpleasant. This is said to be the result of one's own pride and insatiable greed hankering after the possessions and wealth of others. Henceforth, one should practice contentment.
When one has pride and desire, these cause one problems even in this life and will [definitely] bring one problems in the future lives as well.
If one thinks about it carefully, it is quite clear that many of one's problems, complications in life, in one's family that one experiences, or even in the world, many of these originate from a lack of contentment, desire and greed.
For example, if one thinks carefully about the environmental problem the world and the human race face today, such as floods, rain falling during inopportune times and so forth, all these originate from Man's greed, most of which are man-made.
The earth has evolved in a way that it has that natural ability to accommodate all the life forms in it. But now the human race is facing all kinds of problems related to one's survival and environment. Almost all of these originate from our greed.
Everyone needs to survive. All of us have to stay alive and have the right to do so. It is everyone's right to pursue after things that will keep one alive and living. However, when it comes to doing and owning things that are not necessary for one's survival, running after things that are more than what one needs to survive, then this is another matter.
Is one actually entitled to possess more than what one actually needs? Is it one's birthright to simply to do whatever one wishes, thinking: "This is my choice, I have the right to do whatever I wish."
Of course, one needs to stay alive, so one needs to maintain one's physical body. One therefore has the right to do so and one should actually do so. But it is just this. If one is not content but follows after greed, then life becomes very complicated. One creates problems for oneself and for others as well.

Verse 44:

<i>44 When I am sidetracked by attachment or aversion while studying or teaching, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for not considering my own devilish faults. From now on I shall examine these impediments and abandon them.</i>
When practicing, listening and teaching the Dharma, if these are done under the influence of attachment, jealousy, negative competitiveness and so forth, then all such activities would not become antidotes to the afflictions.
This is because, these activities now contribute to one's attachment and hatred.
One may be learning, practicing or teaching the Dharma for quite a long time, maybe years, but somehow one's mind has not improved. In fact, one may find that one has more afflictions like anger and attachment. Instead of such activities contributing to the subduing of one's mind, one may even become more angry, attached and negatively competitive.

These are the experiences of the result of not thinking, considering or reflecting on one's own 'devilish' faults.
Here, the 'devil' or mara is one's self-cherishing. One has not thought and considered well the faults of one's self-cherishing.
Hence the solution is to think well of the faults of one's own self-cherishing and then abandon it.

Verse 45:

45 When all the good I've done turns out badly, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for repaying kindness with ingratitude. From now on I shall very respectfully repay kindness.
This is similar to what is mentioned [in verse 6] of the <i>Eight Verses of Thought Transformation</i> . Sometimes, in spite of one's good intention to help others, they would fail to reciprocate and the situation turns out in a bad way.
This is said to be the result of repaying kindness with ingratitude in the past such as, being ungrateful to those who were kind, like one's parents, and harming those who have helped one.
The advice is therefore, to those who were kind to one and has helped one, one should repay their kindnesses such as taking care of one's parents and not harming others. Starting with one's parents, one should respect and take care of them.
Likewise, one should also do the same to others.

Verse 46:

46 In short, when calamities befall me, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me, like a smith killed by his own sword. From now on I shall be [conscientious] of my own [negative] actions.
This happens to one in life, one does not get what one wants, but getting things one does not want. When such situations befall one, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me, like a smith killed by his own sword.
A smith makes his own sword, but somehow he gets killed by the very sword that he makes.
The solution then, is to henceforth be mindful and conscientious of one's own negative actions.

Verses 47 & 48:

47 When I experience suffering in the [lower realms], it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me, like a fletcher killed by his own arrow. From now on I shall be heedful of my own sinful actions.
This is the same as the previous verse.
48 When the sufferings of the householder befall me, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me, like parents killed by their cherished son. From now on it is right for me to leave worldly life forever.

In reply to the question raised in lesson 12:

Student: What is the difference between the mind element and the mental consciousness element mentioned in the Heart Sutra?

Khenrinpoche: In the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, there is the section dealing with training in the Perfection of Wisdom on the path of meditation: *Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness, there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness.* Here the **five aggregates** are mentioned.

Next are the **twelve sources**: *No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body and no mind.* For any consciousness to be generated, it must arise in dependence upon its own uncommon empowering condition, which is a particular sense power. These **six sense powers** are the uncommon empowering conditions for the generation of the five sense and one mental consciousnesses. *No visual form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no object of touch and no phenomenon,* these refer to the **six objects of observation** of the six consciousnesses.

There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element. This shows the **eighteen constituents**, of which *no eye element and so on up to no mind element* are the six constituents that are the empowering conditions for the generation of the five sense and one mental consciousnesses, which are essentially the **six sense powers** [mentioned]. *And no mental consciousness element* shows the [next set of six constituents, the] **six consciousnesses** themselves which are dependent on the six sense powers [to arise]. What is implied [within this sentence would include] the presentation of the **six objects** of these six consciousnesses. These [three sets of] six [sense powers, consciousnesses and objects make up the six constituents].

Therefore, the mind element refers to one of the six sense powers, whereas the mental consciousness element refers to the mental main mind, together with the five sense consciousnesses.

Qualms pertaining to the Tathagata Essence module:

When the defilements are completely eradicated, does the disintegratedness of the defilements still exist? If so, what function does it perform?

Student 1: When the defilements are removed, its disintegratedness still remains. For example, the stream-enterer has realized emptiness, the afflictions like anger and attachment do not arise anymore. Therefore, no new projecting karma is produced. However, he still needs to take rebirth several times due to the disintegratedness of the past karma that he has created, which are yet to be removed. Hence, the defilements are removed but the disintegratedness remains to produce its effects.

Khenrinpoche: [What you have said] is alright, it can be accepted. But you are not answering the question.

How far can the disintegratedness of the obscurations go? When one becomes a foe destroyer arhat, does one still possess the disintegratedness of the defilements/ obscurations at that time?

In the continuum of the person of the path of seeing, is there the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments? Does the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments exist in the continuum of the person of the path of seeing?

Student 1: During the uninterrupted path, it still exists, once he enters the path of release, then it is no longer there. The defilements and its seeds are removed.

Khenrinpoche: That is clear, we are not debating about that. What we are looking at is that, does the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments still exist in the continuum of the person on the path of seeing? **Student 1:** No, it does not.

Khenrinpoche: Is the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonment not a composite phenomenon/ functioning thing? **Student 1:** Yes, it is. **Khenrinpoche:** If it is a functioning thing, where is it? Does the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonment occurs after the path of seeing abandonments have been abandoned or before it has been abandoned? **Student 1:** After. **Khenrinpoche:** Then where is it? In whose continuum does it exist?

Student 2: It has to exist. This is because, since it is the disintegratedness of afflictions, then this means that the afflictions has ceased to exist, which starts [the process of] disintegratedness. Therefore, the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonment has to come into existence after the path of release.

Khenrinpoche: Are you essentially saying that the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments exists in the continuum of the person on the path of seeing? **Student 2:** Yes.

Khenrinpoche: Is this disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonment a path of seeing abandonment, or a path of meditation abandonment, or is it an obscuration in the first place? **Student 2:** It is a path of meditation abandonment.

Khenrinpoche: Is it an afflictive obscuration or a knowledge obscuration. **Student 2:** It is still an afflictive obscuration.

Khenrinpoche: Based on what you have said, you can extend the same conclusion to the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscuration in that, the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscuration exists on the Buddha ground. [Since you have said that the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments is a path of meditation abandonment], then it would seem that, you would have to say that the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments does not exist in the continuum of the person on the path of seeing.

Khenrinpoche: What [does everyone] think of the question? Do you think it is yes or no? What would be the reasons?

Student 3: It still exists. Disintegratedness means it is a cessation of something , it is also a functioning thing. [With respect to] the defilement, [disintegratedness] means the cessation of the defilement has occurred. Since it is a functioning thing, then it has to continue to exist and cannot go into nonexistence but produce something.

Khenrinpoche: If that is the case, then the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscuration should also exist on Buddha ground because it is produced. This means that, Buddha has the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations. **Student 3:** Yes. **Khenrinpoche:** Since whatever that is on Buddha ground is Buddha, then it follows that the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscuration is Buddha. Therefore, [it follows that] the disintegratedness of knowledge obscuration is an object of refuge.

Khenrinpoche: Is the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscuration Buddha? **Student 3:** It is. **Khenrinpoche:** Then it seems that the knowledge obscurations have moved to Buddha ground. **Student 3:** The knowledge obscurations and its disintegratedness are different. The disintegratedness of knowledge obscurations comes about because the knowledge obscurations no longer exist. If not, how does one posit a disintegratedness of knowledge obscuration?

Khenrinpoche: The disintegratedness of knowledge obscuration is a fault because it is a continuum of knowledge obscuration.

Student 3: But the cessation of the knowledge obscuration occurs only after it has ceased.

Khenrinpoche: When the knowledge obscurations have ceased, would the continuum of the knowledge obscurations also cease? **Student 3:** yes.

Khenrinpoche: The continuum of the knowledge obscurations does not move to enlightenment, isn't it? **Student 3:** Yes.

Khenrinpoche: Then the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations does not move to enlightenment, isn't it?

Student 3: Would that not incur a fault of a functioning thing ceasing into nonexistence?

Khenrinpoche: If the knowledge obscurations do not move into enlightenment, can the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations move into enlightenment? This is because, the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscuration is essentially a continuation of the knowledge obscuration. **Student 3:** Perhaps it cannot. If that is the case, would that mean that it has to change into something else since it is a functioning thing?

Khenrinpoche: Does the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscuration go to enlightenment? This is the essential question.

Student 4: I take that the defilements would include both the manifest afflictive and knowledge obscurations together with the seeds or the predispositions. If one has completely abandoned the defilements, it would mean that both within the set of defilements would have been abandoned.

Khenrinpoche: The very essence of the question is that, is the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations a functioning thing/ composite phenomenon? **Student 4:** Yes, it is impermanent.

Khenrinpoche: This disintegratedness occurs before the abandonment of the defilements or after the abandonment of the defilements?

Student 4: Since it cannot be before, and [if one says it is after, then] there will be problems, so at the time of abandoning the defilements itself, its disintegratedness would also be abandoned at that point. If not, then there will be infinite regression, then there will be no end to the abandonment of the afflictive or knowledge obscurations. I will take the position that, both the afflictions or the knowledge obscurations, together with all its predispositions and imprints are abandoned.

Khenrinpoche: Let's go to the last moment of knowledge obscurations, when that last moment of the subtlest knowledge obscuration is abandoned/ ceased, does the cessation of this subtlest knowledge obscuration produces the disintegratedness or not? **Student 4:** It does not.

Khenrinpoche: There is the factor of disintegratedness of the cessation of the knowledge obscuration. Such a factor of disintegratedness is a non-composite phenomenon.

This is a difficult topic. It is not clear in the great treatises. But I would be inclined to think that even the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonment does not exist. In general, the disintegratedness of a composite phenomenon does produce a continuum of disintegratedness. However, in the context of the cessation of any defilement through the force of applying a powerful antidote, such a defilement together with its continuum is severed/ destroyed. This is what I think.

With respect to functioning things, there are functioning things whose disintegration does produce a continuation of the disintegratedness. But there are also some [functioning things] in which its continuation itself is severed. Hence, when it comes to the defilements, through the force of the antidote, that particular defilement, for which it is an antidote to, together with its continuum, is severed.

You still have think a lot about it.

Continuing discussion on *disintegratedness*:

Khenrinpoche: If one compares these two phenomena: illumination and darkness, when there is strong illumination, darkness is overcome. When there is strong illumination, this will eliminate the darkness immediately. When this darkness is overcome by the illumination, is there the continuum of this darkness?

What I think is that, when there is strong illumination, the darkness is overcome and ceases. There is no continuum of darkness.

Ven Gyurme: What if we turn the light back on?

Khenrinpoche: If we turn the light back on, is that a new darkness or a continuum of the previous darkness? I tend to believe that the continuum of darkness ceases [when there is strong illumination].

Similar to this analogy of illumination overcoming darkness, when the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness is generated with the attainment of the path of seeing, such an uninterrupted path becomes the final antidote to the path of seeing abandonments. Such an uninterrupted path is a forceful antidote, which causes the cessation of the path of seeing abandonments together with its continuum.

Even though I have not seen it mentioned clearly in the treatises, but this is what I think.

With respect to the earlier question, whether the disintegratedness of the defilements exists when the defilements are ceased, perhaps it is better to say that the disintegratedness does not exist when the defilements are removed through the force of their respective antidotes.

Do you see any fallacies to this position?

Student 1: When we perform purification practices, if the continuum of the defilements are ceased, then why do we still experience some lesser effects of the defilements? Perhaps there is still some [leftover] of the disintegratedness within the defilements.

Khenrinpoche: Such an experience is a very sign that you have not fully purified the negativities.

Student 1: Would it not be due to the residual disintegratedness within the defilements? **Khenrinpoche:** You can say that.

Student 1: So the disintegratedness exists? **Khenrinpoche:** That is why you can get a headache.

Student 1 : So you cannot say that there is no [continuum of the disintegratedness] in the example, when the light comes on, the darkness completely disappears.

Khenrinpoche: There is no correlation to the analogy of illumination versus darkness to your example of purification of a specific negativity. That analogy works for my position, when one generates the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing, this acts as a direct and final antidote to the path of seeing abandonments, which are completely ceased by [such an antidote].

Student 1: So in [my example] the antidote is not strong enough, so there is still the effects of the disintegratedness.

Khenrinpoche: [The disintegratedness] is still there, that is why you can still get a headache.

Student 1: According to the Consequence Middle Way School, their assertion of disintegratedness explains how karma can multiply such that, killing an ant, [if that karma is not purified], becomes the same as killing a human being after a few days. The lower schools assert that the karma is merely deposited on the continuum, in that case, it cannot multiply. One therefore cannot explain the multiplication [coherently] based on the lower schools, whereas one can do so for the [Consequentialists] due to their asserting it as a composite phenomenon.

Khenrinpoche: When an action ceases, it produces a disintegratedness. There is then a continuum of such a disintegratedness. This is acceptable. But how can you explain that, just because it continues, it will multiply in every moment?

Student 1: There are two ways of explaining cause and effect. One is, for example, a seed grows into a sprout. In such a case, the cause of the seed ceases when the effect of the sprout is produced. Another example of cause and effect is that, a son is produced from a mother, even though the mother is the cause of the son, after she gives birth to him, she did not die, so the cause is still there. So the cause of the mother does not cease, but is able to produce other sons.

Based on [the second example], the functioning thing actually continues to produce effects. So as long as [the disintegratedness] is not purified completely, it will produce more effects over time. That is why, after killing an insect, [such a disintegratedness] can produce the effect of having killed a human being after some time.

Student 2: For the pure ground bodhisattva superiors who have completely ceased all the afflictive obscurations, how would they still be able generate afflictions like attachment to benefit sentient beings, or as a path to enlightenment?

Khenrinpoche: It is said that, bodhisattvas who are of the definite lineage do not purposely focus on abandoning the afflictions, partly because the afflictions cannot harm them, partly also because they can use some of the afflictions as an aid to benefit others. Having said that, it is not necessarily the case that all bodhisattvas use afflictions as an aid to benefit sentient beings. Those bodhisattvas on the pure grounds do not use afflictions as an aid to benefit others because they have already abandoned them.

Student 2: We understand that all bodhisattvas must eventually enter the tantric path and utilize that. I am not sure whether this is a suitable forum to discuss this question, but as far as utilizing desire as a path to enlightenment, every sentient being needs that to attain enlightenment. If the pure ground superior bodhisattvas have already abandoned it and eventually enters the tantric paths, then how would they still be able to utilize that?

Khenrinpoche: There are qualms on this point. We will discuss this in the future. Perhaps in the tantric module, we will look at the meaning of taking afflictions as the path.

Student 3: It is impossible for an impermanent phenomenon to become a permanent phenomenon and vice versa. So when the continuum of disintegratedness of defilements ceases, would this be a fallacy of a functioning thing ceasing to function and becomes a non-functioning permanent phenomenon?

Khenrinpoche: Using the example of the illumination, when there is very strong illumination, there is no darkness at all, it has ceased to exist, isn't it? Where is the function of the darkness? There is no function, right?

Student 3: The Consequentialists posit an event that occurred in the past, so there is disintegratedness, which functions to bring about the next moment of disintegratedness. So in the context of [a pastness], the continuum of the past cannot become nonexistent.

Khenrinpoche: What you are saying is that, the cessation of any composed phenomenon necessarily produces a disintegratedness. Hence, you cannot accept that the [cessation of the] path of seeing abandonments do not produce a disintegratedness.

Student 3: Are the disintegratedness of the mental obscurations and the disintegratedness of the cessation of the mental obscurations the same?

Khenrinpoche: Think of the butter lamp of a flame that burns for an hour. Up to the last moment before the hour ceases, in every moment, it is essentially a continuum of disintegratedness being produced all the way up to the last moment. But in the last moment of the flame, the flame ceases to exist and does not continue. The continuum of the flame is severed, right?

Student 3: Then the next moment will be the disintegratedness of the cessation of the flame. I take the disintegratedness to be a functioning thing that has the ability to produce the next moment of its disintegratedness, not the meaning of disintegrated as in something that has ceased at its coarse level. If one looks at impermanent phenomenon at a deeper level, the continuum of an impermanent phenomenon has no beginning and no end. If there is an end to it, this would imply that an impermanent phenomenon, a functioning thing, has stopped functioning, which means it has become a permanent phenomenon.

Khenrinpoche: Functioning thing has two divisions. There is a functioning thing in which there is a continuum of it, there is also a functioning thing in terms of its continuum being severed. When a functioning thing exists, it does so in a continuum, but there are also those functioning things whose continua have ceased. So the question is, does the functioning thing whose continuum is severed produces its disintegratedness in the next moment or not?

Verse 49:

49 Since that's the way it is, I seize [the recognition of] the enemy! I seize [the recognition of] the thief who ambushed and deceived me, the hypocrite who deceived me disguised as myself. Aha! It is [self-grasping], without a doubt.

The verses prior to this discussed the faults of self-cherishing. Here, the first part of this verse is expressing the author's acknowledgment, understanding and recognition of the fact now as such, that one's self-cherishing has all such faults.

Just as a robber or thief comes and steals one's possessions without one being aware of it, likewise, one's self-cherishing destroys one's qualities and so forth. The author is saying that, now I finally recognizes and sees what self-cherishing is.

When referring to thieves, robbers or those who plunder one's wealth, one can refer to it as being committed from the outside or internally. If it is committed from the inside, then it is more difficult to recognize. If it is committed by one's loved ones, family members or those one trusts, then it is more difficult to discover this when they stole from one secretly.
Likewise, the inner thief or robber is like one's self-cherishing, who takes away one's virtuous thoughts.
The author is saying that, prior to this, he thought of his self-cherishing as like a loved one. So he made friends with it and believed in it [wholeheartedly]. Just like the person who stole from one from the inside in that, one did not recognize it easily, one thinks that, this person is so close and good to one.
Likewise, with regards to one's self-cherishing, one thinks of it as someone close to one as like a friend. But now, the author is saying that: "No, I finally see the truth."
Most of the time, most of us do not regard one's self-cherishing as the enemy. One does not believe that one's self-cherishing is one's enemy. Even at the times when one has some inclination and idea that one's self-cherishing has some faults and is bad, still, one has very strong doubts as to whether one's self-cherishing is really that bad and is one's real enemy.
Here, the author is proclaiming a sense of wonderment and happiness in that, due to the kindness of the guru and the Dharma, he has finally removed all doubts as to whether his self-cherishing is the enemy or not.

Verse 50:

<i>50 Now, O Yamantaka, raise the weapon of action and spin it furiously over the head [of the enemy] three times. Spread far apart your feet, which are the two truths, open wide your eyes of method and wisdom, and bare your fangs of the four powers and pierce the enemy!</i>
Here, one is making a request to the deity, the wrathful Yamantaka, to completely eliminate and destroy one's self-cherishing.
The main object of fury and wrath is the real enemy, one's self-cherishing. One is requesting and supplicating the wrathful deity, Yamantaka, to raise his weapon over the head of one's enemy.
<i>Now, O Yamantaka, raise the weapon of action and spin it furiously over the head of the enemy three times:</i> head of the enemy refers to one's self-cherishing. Three times symbolizes the conventional bodhicitta, ultimate bodhicitta and the practice of combining these two.
The wrathful deity Yamantaka stands with his legs spread apart, with his right bent and left extended. The right bent leg symbolizes the conventional bodhicitta, whereas the outstretched left leg symbolizes the ultimate bodhicitta.
His two legs represent the two truths, here referring to the two bodhicittas. Both his eyes, referring to method and wisdom, are open wide. This symbolizes the practice of method and wisdom, conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, in equal measure.
<i>Bare your fangs of the four powers and pierce the enemy:</i> This symbolizes the four powers which pierce the enemy of self-cherishing.

Verse 51:

<i>51 O King of [mantras] who torments the enemy, summon that vow-breaker who is destroying me and others, that savage called "[self-grasping], the Enchanter," who, brandishing the weapon of action, runs uncontrollably through the jungle of cyclic existence.</i>
<i>King of [mantras] who torments the enemy:</i> The enemy here is the self-cherishing attitude. The King of the mantras here, refer to the attitude of cherishing others, the attitude that prioritizes others above oneself, that [neglects] oneself and only cherishes others.
There are so many mantras that can be recited, including some very wrathful and powerful mantras. No matter what these are and how often one recites it repeatedly, the recitation of mantras cannot even touch, much less harm one's self-cherishing.
<i>The solution to one's self-cherishing is only the attitude of cherishing others.</i>
When one recites all such powerful and wrathful mantras, putting aside harming one's self-cherishing attitude, oftentimes, such practices only increase one's self-cherishing.
One's enemy, one's self-cherishing attitude, has bounded one in cyclic existence and has one wondering in it without a choice, just like a slave under the control of his master.
One's self-cherishing attitude has made one circle in cyclic existence from the lowest depths of the avici hell, up to the peak of cyclic existence. It is one's self-cherishing attitude that has kept one going repeatedly in cyclic existence.
One has the self-grasping, the apprehension of a self, one also has the self-cherishing attitude. There is the discussion on the relationship between them, as to which is the master and which is the slave.
According to this commentary, the self-cherishing is the master, whereas the self-grasping, the apprehension of a self, is the slave.

Stating the difference between the self-cherishing attitude and the self-grasping conception:

In the earlier verse, it was stated how the self-grasping is the master, whereas the self-cherishing follows the self-grasping. Here, the commentary states the reversal of their roles. The self-cherishing is said to be the master and the self-grasping is the slave to the self-cherishing.
The apprehension of a self, the self-grasping conception, and the self-cherishing attitude, are different. But for one, one has not abandoned any of these two. All the time, these two go co-actively.
A person who enters the Hearer's path and progresses toward the Hearers' path of no more learning, when he abandons the self-grasping conception, the apprehension of a self, he becomes an arhat foe destroyer. But his self-cherishing is still in his mental continuum. For such a Hearer arhat to achieve enlightenment, he needs to enter the Mahayana path.
To do so, he needs to generate bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment. With the generation of bodhicitta, one can say that, the self-cherishing in his mind is destroyed. Such a person who enters the Mahayana path after having become an arhat, is someone who does not have self-cherishing and self-grasping.
But for someone who generates bodhicitta and enters the Mahayana path from the onset without having traversed the Hinayana paths, someone who is of the definite Mahayana lineage, his self-cherishing becomes very weak. But his self-grasping is still there. He achieves the small Mahayana path of accumulation.
It is when the bodhisattva moves onto the middle Mahayana path of accumulation, that he would have definitely realized emptiness. Because of his realization of emptiness, his bodhicitta, being accompanied with such a wisdom, would henceforth not degenerate.
For such a person who is of the definite Mahayana lineage, there is still the self-grasping conception, the apprehension of a self, even after having entered the Mahayana path. In fact, from entering the Mahayana path, all the way up to the seventh ground, the bodhisattva is not able to abandon self-grasping.
Therefore, [from these points] and also from the great treatises, these show that the self-cherishing attitude and the self-grasping conception are not the same.
Therefore, it may be easier to assert that, the self-grasping is the master, whereas the self-cherishing is the slave. This means that, the very root is the apprehension of the self.* <small>See page 74.</small>
This is something to think about because, sometimes, their roles are said to be reversed.
Summon that vow-breaker who is destroying me and others: This means that, it is one's self-cherishing and self-grasping that destroy oneself and others.
It is very rare for those who have self-cherishing to benefit others. Even if they do try to, but the benefits that are effected are not really perfect and ideal.
When one has self-cherishing, one cannot benefit oneself, one cannot benefit others. Here, one is asking the wrathful deity to summon this vow/ samaya breaker, who is destroying oneself and others.

Verse 52:

52 [Summon] him, [summon] him, wrathful Yamantaka! Beat him, beat him, pierce the heart of the enemy, Ego! Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!
One summons the enemy twice, this means applying the two bodhicittas, conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, to overcome one's enemy, one's self-cherishing. One implores the wrathful Yamantaka to summon the enemy, one's self-cherishing.
One also [supplicates] the deity to pierce the heart of one's enemy with the two bodhicittas, to roar, thunder and step on the head of the destroyer, the one who brings about one's downfall, one's evil thoughts of self-cherishing.
Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego: This means to kill the enemy, one's self-grasping. The butcher is one's self-cherishing attitude. [Trying to kill] someone by stabbing him at the heart will definitely succeed in killing him.
Hence, mortally strike at the heart, is an analogy to show the meaning that, with conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, one strikes at the heart of the self-grasping conception and self-cherishing attitude.
Therefore, to strike at the heart of the self-cherishing and self-grasping means to know exactly what their own uncommon mode of apprehension are, how these two minds operate and their views of phenomena.
With the conventional and ultimate bodhicittas, one strikes at the modes of apprehension of the self-cherishing and grasping.
When one sees such phrases in the Buddha's teachings, one has to be careful not to misinterpret them literally. With words like 'kill', 'strike at the heart of the enemy' and so forth, [one has to understand that] the target is never an external enemy.
It is always one's inner enemy of the afflictions, one's self-cherishing and self-grasping.
How does one overcome these wrong concepts of the afflictions of self-cherishing and self-grasping? One has to target their modes of apprehension and abandon the conceived objects of those afflictions or wrong concepts.

Verse 53:

53 Hum! Hum! O great tutelary deity, produce your miraculous apparitions! Dza! Dza! Bind the enemy tightly! Phat! Phat! I beseech you to release me from all [bondage]! Shig! Shig! I beseech you to cut the knot of [grasping]!

This verse is similar to the previous verse. **Shig! Shig!** refer to the conventional and ultimate bodhicittas. With that, **I beseech you to cut the knot of grasping:** Grasping here refers to both self-grasping and self-cherishing.

The way **to cut the knot of grasping** is what has been mentioned, one has to abandon the conceive objects of the afflictions or wrong conceptions.

Student 1: Since it is better to say that self-grasping is the master, and since the impure ground bodhisattvas still possess self-grasping, then does it not imply that, when the master [of self-grasping] is present, the slave [of self-cherishing] would also be present?

Khenrinpoche: The master can be alone [by himself. It is not necessarily the case that,] when there is self-grasping, there must be self-cherishing.

Student 2: In verse 50, it says “**raise the weapon of action**”. What does this phrase mean? How is self-cherishing the master of self-grasping?

Khenrinpoche: Oftentimes, it is from an attitude of self-cherishing that, self-grasping comes. When one cherishes one's I strongly and negatively, prioritizing one's I over others, then self-grasping comes. For one, one experiences these two minds in both roles. Sometimes one's self-cherishing acts as the master that induces one's self-grasping, there are other times when one's self-grasping is the master that induces one's self-cherishing. Hence, one experiences both.

Student 3: Do arhats have mental bodies? Is it possible to have self-cherishing and yet not have a body that is true suffering due to having a mental body? This is because, self-cherishing gives rise to suffering.

Khenrinpoche: I wonder if arhats who have achieved the nirvana with remainder have mental bodies or not? An arhat has no suffering, but does he have self-cherishing? You have to say 'yes'. Hence, it follows that, if one has self-cherishing, one does not necessarily have suffering. Therefore, self-cherishing does not necessarily lead to suffering.

Although the arhats are the same like one in having self-cherishing, but that is all [in terms of the similarity]. Even though oneself and the arhats have self-cherishing, this is not to say that theirs and one's are the same. One's self-cherishing [creates] a lot of problems for oneself. The arhats have self-cherishing but they do not have any problems as theirs are so much weaker. This is primarily due to their direct perception of emptiness as they have abandoned the afflictions. Their wisdom is essentially very powerful and strong.

Although the arhats do not have great compassion, but they have immeasurable compassion. However, there is debate on whether arhats have great compassion or not.

*** Possible reason why it is better to assert that the self-grasping conception is the master:**

When one has the realization of emptiness that weakens the self-grasping conception, one can completely abandon self-cherishing when one generates bodhicitta.

When one does not have the realization of emptiness, even when one generates bodhicitta, due to the strength of the self-grasping conception, one is still unable to completely abandon self-cherishing.

Discussion on whether self-cherishing is an object of abandonment or not:

Student 1: With regards to the objects of abandonment of the afflictive and knowledge obscurations being exhaustive, are these the only objects of abandonment or are there other objects of abandonment that is neither of these two? This is because, an arhat has abandoned self-grasping but still possesses self-cherishing, whereas the bodhisattvas on the middle path of accumulation does not have self-cherishing. So, which object of abandonment does self-cherishing comes after?

Khenrinpoche: What if you try to answer this question first: Is there something that is both self-cherishing and a path?

Student 1: Even if I were to recite taking refuge or reciting the Mahayana mind generation, [aspiration for enlightenment] has an element of acting for one's own welfare. Therefore, there is this sentient being that needs to be cherished as well. If I cannot even cherish myself, then what can I say about cherishing others? So, is self-cherishing made in comparison to taking others as priority to oneself, but not totally not cherishing oneself? After all, oneself is a sentient being. I find it hypocritical to say that: "I cherish others more than myself and totally not cherish myself at all because, myself as a sentient being is not worth cherishing." Hence, the definition of self-cherishing is not very clear.

What is the self-cherishing attitude and the mind that cherishes others:

Khenrinpoche: It is said that, one must discard one's self-cherishing in order for the mind of enlightenment, bodhicitta, to arise. When one's bodhicitta is generated, then the power of one's self-cherishing decreases and it will eventually be abandoned/ eliminated. For the attitude of cherishing others, I do not think that there is the element of disregarding or discarding oneself. Usually self-cherishing means that, one prioritizes oneself over others in that, one is more important than others. Therefore, cherishing others is opposite to that. It is not that one is discarding oneself, rather, in the view of cherishing others, others become more important and precious than oneself. [Hence, from this, one can see that] there is no element of discarding oneself.

Stating what an object of abandonment is:

Khenrinpoche: Ordinary bodhisattvas are forbidden from giving their bodies to others. This is because, the time for that has not come. With respect to the object of abandonment, this is usually referring to the two obscurations, the afflictive and knowledge obscurations. I would think that, if it is an object of abandonment, it would have to be included in these two, as it may be difficult to posit otherwise.

An object of abandonment is something that has to be abandoned by an uninterrupted path which is its antidote.

As to whether self-cherishing is an object of abandonment or not, then going by what is mentioned, it seems that one would have to say that it is not. This is because, if it is an object of abandonment, it would have to be either an afflictive or knowledge obscuration.

For example, when one trains one's mind on the path of the person of medium capacity, through such a training, one comes to develop the thought of renunciation in that, one wishes to abandon cyclic existence and seeks liberation primarily for oneself. The thought seeking liberation/ nirvana for oneself becomes something like self-cherishing, isn't it?

Self-cherishing is not an object of abandonment in the normal sense of the phrase. This is because, if it is an object of abandonment, it has to be either an afflictive or knowledge obscuration, that is, it has to be either a path of seeing or path of meditation abandonment. From the perspective of the Mahayana, it is something to be discarded. But it is not something to be discarded in general. Take for example, the mind wishing to achieve liberation for oneself, this is a virtuous mind.

Debating whether, if it is virtue, it is necessarily something to be adopted or not:

If it is virtue, then it has to be something that has to be adopted and not something to be discarded, isn't it? But from the perspective of the Mahayana, then it is something to be discarded.

Khenrinpoche: Is self-cherishing necessarily an object to be discarded? If it is virtue, it is necessarily something to be adopted, isn't it? If it is virtue, is it necessarily something to be adopted? If it is not, then you have to provide an example of a virtue that one does not really need.

Stating the purpose of question and answer with Khenrinpoche:

Khenrinpoche: When I tell you something and if you don't understand, then I will give you more questions. The whole point of giving you more questions is so that, you can respond. Through that, it will make things clearer for you. But if you don't participate, then I would not be able to make things clearer for you.

Khenrinpoche: Self-cherishing is not necessarily an object of abandonment. This is because, for something to be an object of abandonment, it has to be either an afflictive or knowledge obscuration abandoned by an uninterrupted path.

Stating that self-cherishing is not an object of abandonment in general, but is so from the perspective of the Mahayana:

Hence, self-cherishing is not an object of abandonment. It is therefore not an object to be discarded in general, but from the perspective of the Mahayana, it is an object to be discarded.

This is because, there is a common locus between self-cherishing and a path, there is something that is a self-cherishing and a path, there is something that is self-cherishing and a virtuous mind. Therefore, self-cherishing is not an object to be discarded. This is because, if it is a path, it is necessarily virtue. If it is virtue, it is necessarily an object to be adopted.

Proving that self-cherishing is not necessarily an object of abandonment in general:

Student 1: Not agree. **Khenrinpoche:** If it is a path, isn't it necessarily an object to be adopted? **Student 1:** If it is a path, it is not necessarily that which that I must adopt. **Khenrinpoche:** That is not the question, you must listen to what exactly is the question and answer according to the question. If it is a path, isn't it necessarily an object to be adopted/ cultivated? **Student 1:** Yes. But you did not say that all the paths must be cultivated by a single person. **Khenrinpoche:** Nobody is asking that question. That I know, that's why I didn't ask that. I have said that earlier, it is very clear that, the self-cherishing is not something that is to be discarded, when one is on the Hinayana path. Bodhisattvas do not need it but discard it. So, a path is necessarily virtuous, and virtue is [necessarily] something that is to be cultivated. Hence, self-cherishing is not necessarily an object to be discarded.

Student 1: This whole text is saying that, one's enemy is self-cherishing, but the arhats would also not have duplicity and negative karma. Therefore, to him, why would self-cherishing be a problem? Hence, the enemy may not necessarily be self-cherishing but is self-grasping instead. Since the arhat does not have self-grasping anymore but self-cherishing, he would not create such karma [as stated in this text]. If one wishes to convince an arhat with this text, then it would be rather difficult.

Verse 54:

<p>54 Approach, great tutelary deity Yamantaka. I beseech you at this very moment to rip to shreds this leather sack of actions and the five poisonous afflictions that mire me in the mud of worldly action.</p>
<p>There were some preceding verses making requests to Yamantaka to destroy one's self-grasping and self-cherishing. Likewise here, one has further requests to make to the deity Yamantaka.</p>
<p>Just like a very dirty place that is filled with all kinds of dirty substances, likewise, samsara is filled with the filth of karma and afflictions. This is the creation of one's self-cherishing, which has caused one to fall into the mud of samsara. Here, one is making a request to the deity Yamantaka to quickly destroy one's self-cherishing immediately.</p>

Verse 55:

<p>55 Although it has brought me suffering in the three wretched states of existence, not knowing enough to fear it, I rush to its cause. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</p>
<p>It says here that, all of us have already suffered the terrible sufferings of the lower realms in the past due to one's self-cherishing. Although one has suffered for long periods of time in the lower realms, but now, one seems to have forgotten such sufferings, one is unafraid of such sufferings.</p>
<p>Under the control of one's own self-cherishing, one is again accumulating many causes to return to the lower realms.</p>
<p>One sees how one's self-cherishing is the cause of one's suffering, it is still the cause of one accumulating the karma to be born in the lower realms again. By seeing these, the last two sentences state that:</p>
<p>Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego! evil thought refers to one's self-cherishing, the enemy refers to both one's self-cherishing and self-grasping.</p>
<p>One should therefore strike at the heart of such an enemy. The heart here means the <i>mode of apprehension of self-cherishing and self-grasping</i>. One does so by targeting one's self-cherishing and self-grasping's way of apprehending phenomena.</p>
<p>In Tibetan, many of such later verses ends with <i>Mara Yah</i>. In Sanskrit, it means 'to mortally strike/ take the life.'</p>

Verse 56:

<p>56 Although my desire for comfort is great, I don't accumulate its causes. Although my tolerance for suffering is small, my desire and greed are great. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</p>
<p>Although my desire for comfort is great: There are times in which life is rather comfortable, one does not encounter many problems, things are going well and one just feels nice and wonderful. However, one is not particularly aware that, one needs happiness and peace not merely for a day, but for months, years, even beyond this life and for lifetimes to come.</p>
<p>If one wishes to have a similar standard of living, the happiness that one has and wishes to experience these for the rest of one's life and for all of one's future lives to come, then one needs to accumulate merit, which is the cause of such happiness.</p>

If one can at least think of the happiness of one's own future lives, merely thinking and wishing for oneself to enjoy the happiness of future lives, or even liberation and enlightenment, then this is good.
Comparing these with thinking of this life alone or thinking merely of today's happiness out of concern for oneself alone, this is much worse [compared to] merely thinking of all of one's future lives' happiness, even including up to enlightenment.
In many things that one does in life, whether it is one's work, studying the Dharma, doing one's daily recitation or doing retreats and so forth, whenever one meets with some challenges or difficulties, one merely gives up and postpones it.
Generally, one does not think of future lives' happiness, but primarily only on this life's happiness. One then works so hard that, everything one does is merely to achieve the happiness of this life alone.
If one investigates what is the cause behind such a short-term view that lacks a long-term perspective, merely focusing everything on the here and now, not looking beyond this life, I think it all comes back down to one's self-cherishing attitude.
When it comes to earning money, work or study, one's greed is so amazing. One wishes to be the richest and the highest.
The advice here is that, all of these problems arise from one's self-cherishing. Hence, there is a need to eradicate it.

Verses 57 & 58:

<i>57 Although that which I desire is near at hand, my effort to achieve it is small. Although my projects are many, none of them are completed. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Self!</i>
<i>58 Although I have many new friendships, my modesty and friendships are of short duration. Although I freeload off of others, I eagerly pursue those who pilfer. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</i>
There was an earlier verse that mentions about friendship, whether it is establishing relationships with a friend or guru, the point is not to rush into it.
In the case of taking on someone as one's guru, one should not rush right away but consider and examine it very carefully before one takes and relies on someone as one's guru.
In one fails to do so but rushes into it, then there may be the danger of forsaking or giving up one's guru, and as mentioned before, one then decides to 'switch' gurus.
It is mentioned in the <i>Lam Rim Chen Mo's</i> section on Correctly relying on the virtuous friend, that when it comes to the number of gurus that one should have, two examples were given.
There was a Lama called <i>Sangpowa</i> , who had a hundred or so gurus. Whoever gave teachings, he would regard that person as a guru and received teachings. Whereas the great master <i>Drontompa</i> was said to have only five gurus in his life.
There were essentially different examples of approaches [to taking someone as one's guru].
There was then a [debate] between the <i>Kadampa Geshes Potowa</i> and <i>Rinchen Sangpo</i> where the latter asked which approach was better, whether it was alright to be like <i>Sangpowa</i> , who merely took on many gurus, or it was better to take the approach of <i>Drontompa</i> . <i>Geshe Potowa</i> replied:
<i>“When your mind is still untrained and tends to see faults in others easily, then you will also generate non-faith easily. When your mind is at that level, then it is better to have fewer gurus and take the approach of Drontompa.”</i>
In the <i>Lam Rim</i> literature section on correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, there is an extensive explanation of the eight benefits of correctly relying on the virtuous friend and the eight faults of incorrectly relying on the virtuous friend, after one has taken on someone as one's guru. Hence, there is a lot of detailed explanation [of correctly relying on the virtuous friend].
The point is that, if one does not know how to properly rely on one's virtuous friend after one has taken him as one's guru, then there is no profit but only great loss for one, the disciple.
Therefore, it is extremely important to know, understand and discover more from the <i>Lam Rim</i> teachings.
There are those who go around taking gurus, but later, they would begin to see faults, get upset, criticize and then [abandon] this guru and adopt another, hoping for the next guru to be better [to them]. However, the same situation would occur repeatedly. All of these [problems] come as a result of self-cherishing.
When one has great desire, one would find it difficult to make offerings and be generous. Although what one needs to do is to develop a generous heart, accumulate merit by making offerings, but due to one's great desire, [this stops one from] doing it.
In fact, there may some who may even end up hankering after the wealth of others, stealing, robbing and deceiving others. All such faulty actions are the results of self-cherishing.

Verse 59:

<p>59 Although I am skilled at flattery and asking for things indirectly, my despair is great. Although I assiduously amass things, miserliness binds me. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</p>
<p>Flattery and hinting are mentioned here. These are part of the five types of wrong livelihood mentioned in the <i>Lam Rim</i>.</p>
<p>1) For example, due to wishing to acquire some material goods, one may put on a show in front of others, acting holy, speaking pleasantly, essentially flattering others.</p>
<p>2) There is also asking for things indirectly in the form of hinting. If one is motivated by desire to acquire an object or some material possessions, one hints by saying: "I do have such an object, but perhaps it is not enough."</p>
<p>If one does not have the intention but merely making a plain honest statement, without any intentions whatsoever, then saying: "I do have such an object, but perhaps it is not enough," is alright as it is not hinting.</p>
<p>3) Another wrong livelihood is pressuring others. Sometimes, others may not have any intention to give one something, but motivated by the desire to get that object, one then says and does things that make it difficult for others to reject one.</p>
<p>4) Another [type of wrong livelihood is] baiting. One gives something small hoping that others would reciprocate with a bigger gift and so forth.</p>
<p>5) Next is putting up a false front, [through pretense or posturing], by say, acting holy and so forth. In reality, one is undisciplined and unsubdued, but to get something from others, one puts up a show.</p>
<p>It is said that, all of such faults are the results being motivated by one's self-cherishing.</p>
<p>Again, due to one's self-cherishing, one becomes so stingy and miserly that, one is unable to give to others nor make offerings. One may end up being unable to bear to use even [one's own resources] for one's own sake.</p>
<p>All of such problems are due to the faults of one's own self-cherishing.</p>
<p>As to the question on how self-cherishing harms the arhat, it is actually the arhats' own concern. One's concern is to investigate, analyze, debate and discover for oneself, whether one's own self-cherishing harms one in such ways or not.</p>
<p>Individually, one has to think for oneself about such numerous examples cited in the teachings on the faults of self-cherishing, whether these are indeed true or not. Perhaps, if one really thinks about it, it is rather evident.</p>

Verse 60:

<p>60 Although whatever I have done has been insignificant, I am swollen with pride. Although I have no [reputable qualities], my hunger for it is great. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</p>
<p>Although whatever I have done has been insignificant, I am swollen with pride.: One may have done something that is insignificant, like offering service to one's guru, the Sangha community or the Dharma center, but one behaves in a self-pitiful manner, seeking attention for one's ['hardships'] done for such services.</p>
<p>When it comes to doing things or offering service to one's guru, Dharma center and so forth, if one's motivation is merely to do something good or to accumulate merit and to purify one's mind, then it does not matter how much one does, there is actually no need to even mention any of it, saying: "I did this or that." One does so due to one's self-cherishing.</p>
<p>From the perspective of the Dharma, one actually has no accomplishment, knowledge, understanding and so forth, from the perspective of the worldly, one does not even have any worthwhile achievements to be mentioned.</p>
<p>One is therefore rather insignificant. Yet at the same time, one has very high [ambitions] to be famous, powerful, to attain high status in an organization, society and so forth. All of such problems are the manifestation of one's self-cherishing.</p>

Verse 61:

<p>61 Although my preceptors are many, my ability to keep my vows is small. Although my disciples are many, I give little time to help and look after them. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</p>
<p>One may go around and take gurus everywhere, but one may not pay attention to keeping the samaya between the guru and disciple pure. When one takes someone as one's guru, it is extremely important to maintain a pure samaya, bond or a good relationship. Although one may have many gurus, one fails to pay attention to this. In fact, one allows that to degenerate.</p>
<p>This again is the result of self-cherishing.</p>
<p>There is also an advice here for taking on students. Before taking on any students, one has to check whether it is right and beneficial to do so. After one has taken on disciples, one then has to ensure that one helps them to the end, providing both advice on Dharma and those concerning matters of daily life.</p>

The guru-disciple relationship is extremely important. Before taking on anyone as one's guru, it is very important to check carefully. Once one has taken on someone as one's guru, from one's own side, it is important to not allow one's samaya/ bond with one's guru degenerate.

Similarly, for those who have students, it is important to take care of them, both materially and spiritually.

Verse 62:

***62 Although my promises are many, my [practice] is minimal. Although my fame is great, if it were examined, the gods and demons would put me to shame. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]!
Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!***

This refers to everyone, I guess many of us have taken on the three classes of vows, the tantric, bodhisattva and the different classes of pratimoksa vows. Such promises are not made lightly, but are great promises in that, when one takes on such vows, the witnesses were one's gurus, all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In their presence, one voluntarily accepted the vows.

If one were to honestly reflect and examine the purity of one's vows, I do not think that one will be able to point to any vow that one has kept purely, not even once. All one would find is that, one has degenerated this and broken that.

That is all one finds. One would not find any purity of the vows. This is what is meant by: ***my practice is minimal.***

Although my fame is great: One could be a famous teacher or one could be famous for whatever reasons, if one were to carefully analyze and examine oneself, whether it is one's behavior, conduct or way of thinking, these would even embarrass the ghosts and spirits.

The text says that, if even they are embarrassed by one's conduct, then there is no need to mention what the worldly gods would think.

Whatever has been said in the text are essentially referring to oneself. All of us are like that. All of these are the results of one's self-cherishing.

Discussion on whether self-cherishing is virtuous nor nonvirtuous:

Khenrinpoche: It is clear that, there are certain instances of self-cherishing that brings one to hell, but there are also certain instances of self-cherishing that leads one to liberation. Hence, one cannot assert that self-cherishing is virtuous, neither can one say that self-cherishing is nonvirtuous, as there are different instances.

Student 1: It is said that, self-cherishing is not an afflictive nor knowledge obscuration to be abandoned. But the self-cherishing that leads to suffering has to be abandoned. How is the self-cherishing that leads to suffering abandoned? Does it come through the wisdom directly perceiving of emptiness, or is it through the seven fold instructions?

Khenrinpoche: I have given an answer to this question before. Of the many verses mentioned in this text, there are two lines that end with: **Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, evil thought! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!** This essentially shows the solution to self-grasping and self-cherishing, which means generating the conventional and ultimate bodhicittas. The 'enemy' here refers to self-cherishing and self-grasping. The 'slayer' of this enemy is the conventional and ultimate bodhicittas.

**Hence, one's self-cherishing is destroyed by generating bodhicitta.
Self-grasping is destroyed by the wisdom realizing selflessness.**

Showing when one generates bodhicitta, as well as how it can still degenerate on the small Mahayana path of accumulation:

One either trains in the Seven-fold cause and effect instructions or the instructions of Exchanging Self and Other to generate bodhicitta. When one eventually generates bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment, one enters the Mahayana path and achieves the small Mahayana path of accumulation.

However, there are bodhisattvas on the small path of accumulation who do fall back into the Hinayana. This occurs when they lose their bodhicitta, when their bodhicitta degenerate. Before their bodhicitta degenerated, they had bodhicitta. Nevertheless, their self-cherishing manifested. Therefore, it is due to the arising of their self-cherishing that they fall back into the Hinayana.

There is a historical account related to *Shariputra*. It was said that he did generate bodhicitta. One day, he met someone who asked him for his right arm. Shariputra then used his left arm to chop off his right arm and picked it up with his left arm to offer it to the recipient. This person then admonished Shariputra, saying: "How can you offer me your arm with your left hand? It is so disrespectful!" Shariputra then got so discouraged with that, gave up bodhicitta and fell back into the Hinayana.

Hence, one can train one's mind to generate bodhicitta either through the Seven-fold cause and effect instructions, or through Exchanging Self and Other. At the end of one's training, when one does generate uncontrived, fully-qualified bodhicitta, one simultaneously enters the Mahayana path and achieves the small Mahayana path of accumulation.

Showing the possibility that, it is due to the realization of emptiness that prevents bodhicitta from degenerating:

Nevertheless, at such a level, it is still possible for one's bodhicitta to degenerate. Hence, one can see very clearly that, even after having actualized bodhicitta, while on the small Mahayana path of accumulation, one has not abandoned self-cherishing to the point that it will not arise again.

In the great treatises, it is said that, when one achieves the middle Mahayana path of accumulation, one's mind generation of bodhicitta becomes very stable. Such a mind generation is called the *Mind Generation like Gold*. Gold will always remain stable as it is and does not change into something else. It is said that, regardless of the conditions that this bodhisattva will or may meet with, his mind generation will [thenceforth] never degenerate.

While it is not [clearly stated] in the treatises, but I think that, by this middle Mahayana path of accumulation, one would have realized emptiness. This realization of emptiness could be the reason for the bodhisattva's mind generation not degenerating thenceforth.

Showing the reason that one has to realize emptiness on the middle Mahayana path of accumulation:

But it is clear that one has to say, that on the great path of accumulation, one has the calm abiding focusing on/ observing emptiness. This is because, to enter the Mahayana path of preparation, one needs the [realization of] special insight observing emptiness. This means that, prior to entering this path, and prior to achieving the [realization of] special insight observing emptiness, one necessarily needs to generate the calm abiding that observes emptiness. This is achieved on the great Mahayana path of accumulation. Hence, one probably would have to say that, one definitely must have realized emptiness by the middle Mahayana path of accumulation. This is because, before one has actualized the calm abiding focusing emptiness, which must occur latest by the great Mahayana path of accumulation, one necessarily has to realize emptiness first.

As to whether the bodhisattva would have necessarily realized emptiness by the middle Mahayana path of accumulation or not, in my personal opinion, when I think about it, I would say yes. But I am not saying that this is definitive, that this is definitely so. This is because, it is not clearly mentioned in the treatises. Hence, this can be a subject for discussion, something to be analyzed.

But it is very clear that, on the small Mahayana path of accumulation, there are instances of both in that, there are bodhisattvas here who have not realized emptiness and there are also bodhisattvas who already have realized emptiness. This is because, there are those sharp-facultied bodhisattva trainees who enter the Mahayana path of accumulation with the realization of emptiness, whereas the dull-facultied bodhisattva trainees do not enter the Mahayana path of accumulation with the realization of emptiness. Hence, on the Mahayana small path of accumulation, there are instances of both.

Hence, I would think that, from the Mahayana middle path of accumulation, self-cherishing would never arise thenceforth. This is my personal opinion.

How does one overcome self-cherishing? Likewise, how does one overcome self-grasping?

The general procedure is the same: self-cherishing and self-grasping have their own modes of apprehension, its own manner of apprehending its object, its own view of the world.

How to overcome self-grasping: Hence, to overcome self-grasping, the apprehension of true existence, which is the mode of apprehension, one has to generate another mind whose mode of apprehension is the direct opposite to that of self-grasping. This is the general procedure for overcoming self-grasping.

How to overcome self-cherishing: Likewise, self-cherishing also has a particular mode of apprehension. To counteract and overcome this, one has to generate a mind whose mode of apprehension is the complete opposite to the mode of apprehension of self-cherishing. This is the mind having the mode of apprehension that cherishes others. Through gradual training, one eventually develops bodhicitta, [which is the result of training] the mind in counteracting self-cherishing. Simultaneous with the generation of bodhicitta, one enters the Mahayana path and achieves the small path of accumulation. When one achieves the middle path of accumulation, then perhaps one can say that, thenceforth, self-cherishing will never arise.

What is the meaning of mind training:

The text here is the [treatise] of Mahayana mind training, the subject matter is the practices of the path of a person of great capacity. It is an instruction for generating the mind of enlightenment. Hence, in terms of *Lojong*, mind training, it specifically means this Mahayana mind training, the practice to develop bodhicitta, and how to increase it once it has been generated. But generally, mind training means developing the mind, which can include training the mind on the paths of the person of small, medium, as well as great capacities. The intended usage of this word-phrase mainly refers to Mahayana mind training.

Why one needs to train in gradual stages and when one actually starts to overcome self-cherishing:

However, before one can even start to train one's mind on the path of the person of great capacity, the Mahayana practices, one must firstly have trained one's mind on the path shared with the person of small capacity first. When one has achieved that, then one trains one's mind on the path that is shared with the person of middling capacity. It is only after that, would one be allowed to, or is qualified to train in the practices of the person of great capacity. This is explained very clearly in the *Stages of the Path* literature.

The main emphasis of the training on the path of the person of great capacity: Therefore, the main and biggest obstacle for someone attempting to be a person of great capacity is self-cherishing. This is the reason why, to such a person, a detailed explanation on the faults of self-cherishing is given. There is no mention of any good of self-cherishing for such a person, there is nothing good about it as it is plainly bad. Hence, the focus is on [overcoming self-cherishing]. It is like what one finds in this text, from start to finish, it is just teaching about how bad self-cherishing is. Hence, such an instruction is for the person who is about to train his mind in the Mahayana. He is someone who has already completed training his mind on the paths shared with the persons of small and medium capacities.

The main emphasis of the training on the path shared with the person of small capacity: When one examines the path shared with the person of small capacity, there is no teachings whatsoever on the faults of self-cherishing. However, there are teachings on death and impermanence, karma and its effects and so forth. At such a stage, the entire emphasis is to reverse one's preoccupation and attachment to the happiness of this life.

The main emphasis of the training on the path shared with the person of medium capacity: After one has overcome the attachment to this life's happiness, one then starts to train one's mind on the path that is shared with the person of medium capacity. When one examines the instructions at this stage, there is again no teachings on the faults of self-cherishing. Rather, the explanations are all about the sufferings of cyclic existence, how one circles in it, the presentation of the four noble truths and so forth. All of which are taught with the intention of producing the thought for liberation, to overcome the attachment even to future lives' happiness, how one really has got to achieve liberation from cyclic existence.

Hence, there should not be any confusion as to whether self-cherishing is good or bad, when is it good or when is it bad. If one has understood the entire path structure, then it is very clear.

Debating what constitutes virtuous or non-virtuous self-cherishing:

Student 2: What is the difference between virtuous self-cherishing and nonvirtuous self-cherishing? **Khenrinpoche:** Someone give [an example] of each.

Student 3: Virtuous self-cherishing: I want to attain nirvana, to get out of samsara and achieve lasting happiness for myself alone. Non-virtuous self-cherishing: Wishing for this life's happiness. **Khenrinpoche:** The mind seeking for a human or a god rebirth is a virtuous mind or not? Is such a mind self-cherishing?

Student 3: It is self-cherishing and virtuous. It is virtuous because, before one can attain liberation or enlightenment, one needs to gain temporary goals of high rebirths which are conducive conditions to practice on the path. One aims for higher rebirths.

Khenrinpoche: There is a wish to have long life in this life, is it self-cherishing and is it virtuous? **Student 3:** It is self-cherishing, [as to whether it is virtuous or not, then] it depends on what one wants to use it for.

Khenrinpoche: Therefore, by extending on what you have said, it follows that the mind wishing for future lives' happiness as a god or a human being is not necessarily virtuous. This is because, it also depends [on what one wants to use it for]. Hence, there is no pervasion [in stating that], the mind wishing for a good rebirth is necessarily virtuous.

Student 3: Then it is not necessarily virtuous, as you want it for its own end to achieve a god rebirth, you don't want to use a high rebirth for a higher purpose like liberation.

Ven Gyurme: Are you saying that, merely wishing for a good rebirth for its own sake is necessarily nonvirtuous? **Student 3:** Yes.

Khenrinpoche: One does cultivate generosity and ethical discipline seeking for the happiness of future lives, thinking: "I want a good rebirth, good body, possessions and wealth in my future life." Due to that, there is karma accumulated. Is such a karma, which will ripen in the form of good rebirth and enjoyments, necessarily virtuous or nonvirtuous?

Student 3: Since it does not produce suffering, then it has to be virtuous.

Khenrinpoche: If that is the case, then the mind that seeks for a good rebirth in the future life is necessarily virtuous, isn't it?

Student 3: Yes. **Khenrinpoche:** Then, there is no asserting "it depends", isn't it? **Student 3:** Yes, correct. Since higher rebirth does not produce suffering on its own, then the karma is not nonvirtuous. **Ven Gyurme:** So this aggregate is not suffering?

Khenrinpoche: Since you have no suffering, so [this means] you already achieve nirvana? **Student 3:** At least there is no obvious suffering in the god realms. **Khenrinpoche:** So he is saying he has no obvious suffering!

Khenrinpoche: So, the mind seeking for future lives' happiness is nothing except virtue. **Student 3:** Yes. **Khenrinpoche:** Hence, the wish to live very long in this life is self-cherishing, but is it virtuous? **Student 3:** I suppose then it is virtuous.

Khenrinpoche: Therefore, sponsoring pujas for the happiness of this life is virtuous, reciting mantra for this life's happiness is virtuous. **Student 3:** I have no choice but to say it is virtuous. **Khenrinpoche:** Is practicing generosity seeking for wealth and prosperity in this life virtuous? **Student 3:** This sounds like it is a worldly concern [involved with] the eight worldly dharmas. Hence, it is non-dharma/ nonvirtuous. **Ven Gyurme:** But you just said that it is virtuous.

Student 3: When the arhat enters the Mahayana, at which point does he enter? Is it on the path of accumulation?

Khenrinpoche: The answer is very easy and straightforward, but what is the doubt that made you ask such a question?

Student 3: He has the direct realization of emptiness and he has generated bodhicitta and enters the Mahayana path. I don't know how strong his bodhicitta is, whether can it still degenerate?

Khenrinpoche: An arhat does not have bodhicitta. The moment an arhat generates bodhicitta, he becomes a bodhisattva. He enters the Mahayana path of accumulation. There is no other points of entry.

Student 3: Since he already realized emptiness directly, then does he progress through the paths quicker than others? Moreover, he has abandoned all afflictive obscurations.

Khenrinpoche: It is good to have questions. When questions are raised and there is discussion going on, it is very important to pay attention. This is because, one can really understand a lot merely through participating in question and answer.

What to think when one feels uncomfortable while learning about one's own self-cherishing:

When one learns, listens to and reads about the Mahayana mind training, there will be occasions when one will feel uncomfortable, one may even feel hurt. This is actually a good sign. This is because, this is a sign that something has finally touched, poked and hurt one's own self-cherishing. Therefore, if one knows how to listen, one will feel uncomfortable. This is because, one is supposed to be reflecting on one's own state of mind. These teachings are not meant as description of what others are doing or not doing. If one listens to the teachings and thinks that it is referring to someone else, then this will not touch one's heart. If one listens and learns such teachings properly, then one should essentially be looking out for one's own mistakes and faults. Then [from this], if one really feels uncomfortable at times, then it is a good sign.

It is said that, one can receive blessings when listening to the teachings. So, when one feels uncomfortable when one hears such teachings on the faults of one's own self-cherishing, that one has been 'exposed', then this is a sign that, the blessings of the Dharma has entered one's heart.

However, if one does not have self-cherishing, then whether one feels anything or not, it is alright. But such teachings mention one verse after another about the problems and faults of one's own self-cherishing. One only feels hurt because one has self-cherishing. If there is no self-cherishing, then one would not feel offended, hurt or uncomfortable.

Therefore, when one studies, hears and listens to such mind training teachings, if one does not feel anything, there are only two possibilities, it is either:

*One does not have self-cherishing,
Or one has no idea how to approach the Dharma, listen to the teachings and utilize it.*

Verse 63:

<i>63 Although my learning is scant, my penchant for empty verbiage is great. Although the extent of my religious instructions is slight, I pretend to understand everything. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</i>
Although one's learning and understanding of the Dharma is little, one has not done much learning and reflection, but one pretends to be very knowledgeable, a meditator and a great practitioner.
When someone asks a Dharma question, due to one's limited knowledge and experience, since one has nothing much to say, one then says: "There is no need to study and know so much, one just needs to examine one's mind. Everything is in the nature of emptiness." One just leaves it as that. Such problems occur due to one's self-cherishing.
When one has extensive learning, understanding and knowledge, then it does not matter what question others may pose to one, one will be able to answer them, or at least eliminate their qualms by employing reasons and scriptural sources.
Through employing scriptural sources, quoting citations and reasoning, one can give a reasonable answer and help others gain an understanding and eliminate their qualms. But if one's understanding is limited, but yet one wants to talk Dharma to others, then when others ask question, due to one's limited understanding, then what one can say is also limited.
But due to one's self-cherishing, one does not end there, one then fabricates answers, make up stories, tells all sorts of lies, half truths and so forth, just to come up with some answer. This is the result of self-cherishing.
Even though one actually lacks any real great understanding, but one may know a few sentences from this sutra or that text. One then tells others as if that the few sentences one knows represents the entire Dharma.
One just keeps telling others about those few sentences repeatedly, conveying the appearance that those are the most important, real emphasis, that one really knows a lot. While not really knowing everything, but pretending to know. Again, this is the fault of one's self-cherishing.
All of us are like that, when one is asked a question, one just has to be honest about it, whatever one knows, one just answers what one knows. But if one really does not know the answer because one has not studied nor thought about it well, then just say: "I am afraid I don't know." One just leaves it as that.
If one is a graduate or going to be a graduate from the Basic Program, then if someone asks one a question, but if one does not know, then just say one does not know. One should not pretend to know [what one does not know].

Verses 64 & 65:

<i>64 Although my companions and underlings are numerous, not one is dependable. Although I have many masters, not one is a reliable protector. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</i>
<i>65 Although I have high status, my [qualities are] less than an evil spirit's. Although I am a great religious teacher, my passions are grosser than a demon's. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</i>
If those in high positions and status have many qualities, especially the internal qualities of the mind that would enable them to help others, if they also have the intention to be of benefit to others, then this is very useful. They could really be beneficial to others. Otherwise, merely having high position, power and authority alone do not necessarily bring benefits to others.

It [is of not much benefit] merely because one has a high title, or that one is a Lama, Geshe or a Dharma teacher. One must have the qualities and the appropriate conduct and behavior. Otherwise, even though one may possess a title, but one's conduct can be motivated excessively by anger, attachment, jealousy and negative competitiveness.
If one has not [subdued] these to a stable extent, then merely having such titles alone [would not benefit]. In fact, here it says that, there are those who may possess titles but without the qualities, whose actions and behaviors are worse than the spirits.
All of such problems are said to be the results of self-cherishing.

Verse 66:

<i>66 Although my view is lofty, my behavior is worse than a dog's. Although my good qualities are many, their basis is carried off by the wind. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</i>
<i>Although my view is lofty:</i> One may have some understanding of the view of reality, emptiness. Although such understanding is little, but one acts as if one has a very correct, high and profound understanding of emptiness.
At the same time, one's conduct and behavior are actually worse than a dog's.
In reality, the person who really has a correct and profound understanding of emptiness is someone who would then guard his vows and samayas carefully. He will be someone who will never despise nor deprecate karma and its effects.
However, there are those whose views may be very lofty, thinking and explaining about emptiness, yet at the same time, they do not pay attention to guard their vows and samayas. In fact, they may even despise and deprecate karma and its effects.
All such problems are again the results of self-cherishing.
[It does not matter] whether one's view on emptiness is lofty or not, the point is that, one has to abide by the ethical discipline that one has adopted. For example, there may be ordained persons who explain about emptiness, but are not careful about their ethical conduct. As an ordained person, one has to be celibate and does not partake alcohol.
In my village, I've seen with my own eyes, ordained monks getting drunk and have to vomit in the midst of during pujas. This [can be considered] a behavior that is worse than a dog's.
The practice of ethical discipline is the foundation of all the qualities. Hence, it is important to practice ethical discipline.
There is a verse by the <i>Fifth Dalai Lama</i> , who said: <i>“Although tantra is said to be very secret and profound, one must first have trained the mind in the shared paths before attempting to practice it. Otherwise, it would be like riding an untamed elephant and, in the end, you destroy yourself.”</i>
What this verse is saying is that, <i>One should not act in any way one pleases merely because one says one is practicing tantra. The foundational practice of ethical discipline is important.</i>

How the the persons of sharp faculty achieves enlightenment faster than those of dull faculties:

Student 1: What is the difference between a person of sharp-faculty and a person of dull-faculty?

Khenrinpoche: In the study of the *Abhisamayalankara (The Ornament of Clear Realization)* or the study of the *Prajñāparamita (The Perfection of Wisdom)*, one finds these two terms:

1) *Follower of faith (dull-faculty)* , and 2) *Follower of the Doctrine (sharp-faculty)*.

For example, there are people who have faith and devotion towards Buddha just because they either think that or someone tells them that He is very precious and holy. This is mere belief, as they do not think too much about the reason why Buddha is precious or holy. Such people are examples of those who are followers of faith.

There are others who do not believe immediately merely because they are told that the Buddha is very precious or holy. Rather, they would analyze and think about the reason [for asserting that] the Buddha is precious and holy. They would analyze the reasons, and after having resolved them, they would then [arrive at an] answer and hence also develop faith. Such people are said to be the followers of the doctrine or the Dharma.

If one were to analyze the difference between them, the followers of faith are those who merely believe, but they do not really know the reason for believing. Hence, they do not have the valid reasons for believing.

If one compares the faith of the followers of faith with the faith of the followers of the doctrine, one would conclude that, the faith in the minds of the followers of the doctrine would have a better quality. This is because, they do not develop faith in the Buddha without analyzing. Since they have already resolved [the doubts] and seen the reasons, then the faith of such people are definitely more stable and of a much better quality. This is actually the real faith.

It is said in the teachings that, the faith in the minds of the followers of the doctrine is *irreversible*. Once they develop the faith through analysis, nothing can change their minds. Such a faith is very stable, it will necessarily not change.

Although the faith in the minds of the followers of faith is also faith, but such a faith is not stable at all as it is subject to change.

How the training of the Seven-fold Cause and Effect Instruction is contained within the trainings of Exchanging Self and Other:

Student 2: The practice of exchanging self and other does not fit the minds of dull-faculty bodhisattvas. How does it relate to what has been explained?

Khenrinpoche: In the practice of the *Seven-fold Cause and Effect Instructions* for generating bodhicitta, one has to train according to the steps, beginning with *recognizing all sentient beings as one's mothers, remembering their kindnesses, having the wish to repay their kindnesses, generating the love that sees all sentient beings as precious and pleasant, compassion* and so forth.

For the person who is training to develop bodhicitta through the *Instruction on Exchanging Self and Other*, the essentials of the *Seven-fold Cause and Effect Instructions* are already contained in it. The sharp-facultied trainees have the wisdom that is able to reflect on the essential points of the *seven-fold cause and effect instructions* while they are training their minds in the system of *exchanging self and other*.

How the all the trainings involved in Exchanging Self and Other would probably involve the realization of emptiness:

The very first step in training the mind in *exchanging self and other* is to *equalize self and other*. One has to wonder, whether would one need the view of emptiness to be able to **fully equalize self and other**? Does one need the view of emptiness to be able to do that fully?

This is done by seeing how, in emptiness, oneself and others are equal. This is because, it is said that in general, the sharp-facultied trainees realize emptiness first, before they generate bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment. They are called sharp-facultied also due to such a reason.

It is said in the *Lam Rim* text, the *Liberation in the Palm of the Hand* that, the essential points of the *Seven-fold Cause and Effect Instructions* are contained in the practice of *Exchanging Self and Other*, but not necessarily the other way round.

How the quality of compassion in the minds of the trainees of Exchanging Self and Other would be better:

The quality of the compassion that is generated through training the mind in exchanging self and other is very different and powerful. This is especially if it is influenced by the view of emptiness. This is because, those who have the view of emptiness realize what is the root of samsara, the source of all the problems. They know how, due to ignorance, sentient beings circle in it. Such an understanding induces a very strong compassion in the trainees when they focus on how sentient beings suffer. Hence, such a strong compassion is very much influenced and supported by the view of emptiness.

How the realization of emptiness enables these trainees to develop stronger compassion and bodhicitta:

This is because, the trainees who have realized the emptiness of inherent existence, see for themselves that, what ignorance believes in, inherent existence, actually does not exist, have never existed, and will also not exist. They see that the *conceived object of ignorance* does not exist whatsoever. Due to such a fundamental mistake of not realizing this, oneself and others have to circle in cyclic existence and [encounter] suffering merely because of believing in something that has never existed. Due to that, one suffers in taking on rebirths repeatedly in cyclic existence.

Therefore, due to this, the compassion that is generated by such an understanding will be much stronger, [as one realizes that, sentient beings are suffering for no meaningful reasons]. Hence, the strength of the bodhicitta that is induced by such a strong compassion would naturally be stronger. Hence, the wish to achieve enlightenment will also be much stronger, as this is influenced by the view of emptiness.

As a result, one can posit that, the speed of achieving enlightenment for such trainees would also be faster than others.

Between being sharp or dull, it is still hard working joyous perseverance that makes the difference:

In the common usage of the word-phrase, *being sharp*, [it can refer to] a person who, when one tells him something, would understand it immediately. For someone who is *dull*, one may need to explain to him many times before he understands. Such a person is called 'slow or dull' even by conventional terms.

For those who are sharp-facultied and have joyous perseverance, they would definitely achieve their goals very quickly. However, if even one has very sharp faculties, but if one is not hard working and lacks joyous perseverance, then one is not really going to achieve one's goals.

Although the dull-facultied trainees may take a longer time to achieve their goals, but if they work hard at it, even though it may take longer, they will still achieve their goals. This is provided that they joyously persevere continuously. This is therefore better than the sharp-facultied trainees who do not work hard, [which means] they are not going to achieve their goals.

In general, the intelligent ones are usually less hard working than those who are not so intelligent. Those who are not so intelligent generally tend to work harder. This is because, they know that they are not as quick as others, so they would put in more effort.

Khenrinpoche: You all know the story of the race between the turtle and the rabbit. Who won? The turtle won in the end. Even though the rabbit ran faster, but he rested and fell asleep while he was ahead of the turtle, who walked slowly, and who eventually won.

Verse 67:

67 [I desire the best of everything] and I blame all my quarrels on others for no reason. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!
As mentioned in the <i>Eight Verses</i> : “When others insult or abuse me out of jealousy, I shall accept the defeat and offer the victory to others,” then in the context of the pure practitioner of Mahayana mind training here, such a person does just that. However, one is the complete opposite of this in that, one does not want any loss but only victory and the best of everything.
One does not wish for any loss to occur to oneself. If ever any losses were to occur, one then wishes that it may occur to someone else. This is when someone points out one's mistakes, or accuses one as being responsible for something bad that has occurred. One usually does not accept the responsibility, denies any responsibilities and blames it on others instead.
One essentially shifts the blame onto others. This is all due to one's self-cherishing that motivates one to act and behave this way. Hence, one needs to destroy one's self-cherishing.

Verse 68:

68 Although I have put on the saffron robe, I appeal to evil spirits for protection. Although I have taken religious vows, my behavior is [like the maras]. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!
Although I have put on the saffron robe, I appeal to evil spirits for protection: This refers to the conduct of some ordained people. The vows of ordination are taken on the basis of having refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
Although one may have the ordination vow, starting with the novice ordination, instead of entrusting oneself [wholeheartedly] to the Three Jewels, one's object of refuge, one prays and entrusts oneself to the spirits instead.
Such incorrect behaviors are again due to self-cherishing. This applies to all Buddhists, someone who has taken refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Hence, one should only and completely entrusts oneself and one's hopes to the Three Jewels. Instead of doing so, there are [buddhists] who entrust themselves and rely on spirits and worldly beings.
In the precepts [to be observed by those who] have taken refuge, one of the proscriptive precepts, that which one should not do after having gone for refuge to the Buddha is, that one should not take refuge in spirits and worldly beings.
One may have taken on all the different classes of vows, the pratimoksa, bodhisattva and tantric vows. Instead of living one's life according to the boundaries set up by these vows, one does not pay attention to them and keep [them pure], one's conduct of body, speech and mind are contrary to them, behaving like those of the spirits and demons.
Such demonic behaviors are again the results of self-cherishing. Hence, one must destroy one's self-cherishing.

Verse 69:

69 Although the [deities] give me happiness, I worship evil spirits. Although the Dharma guides me, I deceive the Three Jewels. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

With respect to the enlightened activities of the Wisdom Truth Body, there are two divisions:

- 1) The enlightened activities of the Wisdom Truth Body abiding in the Truth Body itself,
- 2) The enlightened activities of the Wisdom Truth Body abiding within sentient beings who are to be helped.

The first line of verse 27 of the tathagata essence text says that: *Because a perfect Buddha's body is pervasive.* This refers to the enlightened activities of the Dharmakaya [Wisdom Truth Body] that pervades all sentient beings.

This means that the enlightened activities of the Dharmakaya radiates and reaches out to sentient beings. Because sentient beings can receive the enlightened activities of the Wisdom Truth Body, because the enlightened activities of the Dharmakaya does engage sentient beings, from such a perspective, sentient beings possess the tathagata essence.

The teachings say that:

**Every single virtue in the continua of sentient beings
1) Arises due to the blessings of the Wisdom Truth Body, and
2) It is the enlightened activity of the Wisdom Truth Body.**

Hence, of the two types of enlightened activities of the Wisdom Truth Body, that which exists in those sentient beings who are to be helped, [refers to the virtue in the continua of sentient beings].

The happiness that everyone is seeking, is a product of its cause, which is virtue. Happiness arises from virtue. Every single virtue in one's continuum arose due to the blessings of the Wisdom Truth Body, [the arising of virtue] *is* the enlightened activity of the Wisdom Truth Body.

Although all of one's happiness came from virtue, which itself is the enlightened activities of the Wisdom Truth Body, one is unaware of that. Instead, one seeks refuge and entrusts oneself to spirits and worldly entities.

It is common to hear someone says: "I pray to such spirits, as a result, everything in my life is very smooth going and I meet with a lot of success." However from this perspective, it is said that every single happiness that one experiences is the result of one's virtue, which itself *is* the enlightened activities of the Wisdom Truth Body. This is something one needs to analyze.

It is said clearly in the *Eighth Chapter of the Ornament of Clear Realization*, in the topic of the Wisdom Truth Body, that:
Every virtue in the continua of sentient beings is the enlightened activities of the Wisdom Truth Body.

In reality, the main factor that protects one from all the unpleasant and undesirable experiences and sufferings is the Dharma. However, one does not accept nor believe this, thinking that it is not the Dharma [that protects one] but is something else. It may be due to that person or that being, something else other than the Dharma. All such mistakes are due to self-cherishing.

Verse 70:

70 Although I have always resorted to secluded places, I am carried away by distraction. Although I request instruction in the holy Dharma and the religious sciences, I cherish divination and shamanism. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

Shamanism here includes rituals, pujas and prayers. **Although I have always resorted to secluded places:** Although one's body may be in an isolated place for the purpose of practice, but one's mind is always "running into town."

Although one may physically come to an educational institution, a place to learn the Dharma, but one's mind is somewhere else. All such problems are due to one's self-cherishing.

Such supreme Dharma teachings like the *Lam Rim, the Stages of the path to enlightenment*, as well as the *Mahayana Mind Training*, are to be learnt extensively and reflected upon, so that one can internalize and utilize it to train one's mind,

Even though one may acquire vast amount of information through study, one may even reflect on them, but when it comes to putting these [knowledge] into practice, one does something else. One learns how to do divination, astrology and so forth to foretell the future. One also spends one's time doing pujas everywhere for others.

Verse 71:

71 Forsaking [ethical discipline,] the moral path to liberation, I cling to my home. Pouring my happiness into the water, I run after suffering. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

This refers to those who get ordained. To do so, one needs to have some thought of renunciation. On this basis, one seeks liberation. The point of becoming and having an ordained person's lifestyle is a method to achieve liberation.

If after becoming ordained, one fails to keep the [stipulated] ethical discipline, at the same time, one also lacks any wish for liberation, [due to this,] one may subsequently disrobe and become a lay person again. All the complications and problems of life then arise again. If this happens to one, then this again is said to be the result of one's self-cherishing.

Verse 72:

72 Turning away from the gateway to liberation, I wander in remote places. Despite acquiring the precious jewel of a human body, I wind up in hell. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

The entrance to liberation is the Dharma. To achieve liberation from cyclic existence, the everlasting happiness, one has to practice the Dharma. Although one may wish for liberation, but instead of practicing the Dharma, one wonders everywhere.

For the sake of achieving the happiness of this life alone, one may even disregard [refraining from] nonvirtue. One ends up accumulating all sorts of negativities, the causes for the lower realms.

Verse 73:

73 Putting aside the particulars of spiritual development, I engage in business. Leaving my guru's school, I idle about the town. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

Instead of going to the place where there is teachings given by one's teacher, one wonders in town. This is again the result of one's self-cherishing attitude.

Verse 74:

74 Abandoning my own livelihood, I plunder others' property. Forsaking my [own] food, I rob others of sustenance. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

Abandoning my own livelihood, I plunder others' property: While one possesses resources, one does not use it, but uses others' resources instead. There are possessions that are collectively owned by a community such as the possessions of the Sangha community. An individual member of such a community may not use the possessions without prior permission.

Instead of using one's own possessions, if one uses such shared common properties without prior permission, then it is said in the *Lam Rim* that, the negative karma of such an act is extremely heavy. The fruitional effects is something that one will and must definitely experience, one cannot escape from experiencing the effects of such an action.

Plunder here refers to using the shared possessions of the Sangha community without prior permission.

This is the same with using the common possessions of an organization such as a Dharma center. If one uses its properties without prior permission, then it is also a negativity.

There may be occasions where one has enough for oneself. One can actually survive on one's own using one's resources. However, one does not use it, one instead steals the possessions of others. This is the result of self-cherishing.

Verse 75:

75 Aha! Although my endurance for meditation is small, my [wish for clairvoyance] is [intense]. Though I have not realized even the beginning of the path, I [am quick-footed, running] around to no purpose. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

There are people who seek to be clairvoyant, wishing to read the minds of others to know what others are thinking. To achieve this, one has to strive at the method for developing clairvoyance over a long period, like months and even years.

Although one may have the desire to develop clairvoyant powers, but one's endurance for practice of meditation is small. When nothing happens after a month or so of practice, [one did not continue with it,] but instead goes around giving others the impression by telling lies that one has developed clairvoyance even though one has nothing.

It is not unusual to have different kinds of meditative experiences in that, in the view of such a meditation, one sees all kinds of appearances. Many times, people think that seeing all such things in meditation is something special.

They then feel as if they are progressing well, developing some special abilities and powers. They may even think that they are beginning to have some clairvoyance. [Due to that,] they may then go around telling people that they have all sorts of visions, trying to persuade others that [what they are saying are] really true and valid.

However, most of the time, all such experiences are actually due to the influence of spirits and maras.

Though I have not realized even the beginning of the path, I [am quick-footed, running] around to no purpose: As a practitioner, one's goal should actually be moving/ running quickly towards enlightenment. To do so, one's mind must be conjoined with and achieve a path. This is the manner to progress towards enlightenment.

Instead of doing this, one seeks out instructions for developing common worldly attainments like the 'quick-foot' in that, by depending on certain practices and substances, one develops the ability to walk quickly, covering a huge distance in a short time.

Verse 76:

76 When someone gives me useful advice, my hostile mind takes that person for an enemy.

When someone deceives me, I repay that heartless one with kindness.

Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

When others like one's teachers or parents and so forth, give one useful advice, pointing out one's faults and mistakes with the thought to benefit one, one regards them as enemies.

Then there are those who agree with all the things one does and says, even though these may be wrong. But because they accord with one's wishes, one regards these people who are actually deceiving one as being kind.

That heartless one: Here, it refers to oneself who is being deceived in that:

One loses all common sense, unable to recognize what is right or wrong, what is beneficial and what is harmful to one.

Verses 77 and 78:

77 I tell my intimate friends' secrets to their enemies. I shamelessly take advantage of my acquaintances. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

78 My frustration is intense and my thoughts are coarser than everyone else's. I am hard to get along with and I continually provoke others' bad character. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]!

Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

My frustration is intense: Here it refers to people who are very short-tempered. It does not require much to agitate them. Someone has to merely do or say something, or look at them in [a disagreeable manner,] and they would immediately become agitated. They also bear grudges easily [and harbor] resentment [for a long time].

My thoughts are coarser than everyone else's: There are some people who have a lot of discursive thoughts, worries and unnecessary thinking: "If I were to say this or do that, what would others think of or do to me?" There is excessive thinking to the extent that, one finds it difficult to do anything. Others generally find it difficult to get along with such persons.

Again, this is one's self-cherishing attitude that makes one very short-tempered, easily agitated, harbor grudges and thinking unnecessarily without any purposes.

What is blessing and the signs one has received it:

Student 1: Driven by self-cherishing, when someone points out one's faults, one feels uncomfortable. How is this the sign that the blessings of the gurus have entered one's heart? What is the meaning of having received the blessings and what are the signs?

Khenrinpoche: The word for blessing in Tibetan is *Chin Lap*, which has the connotation of [having the magnificent potential] to change. To receive the blessing means that, one has made some progress internally, that one's mind has transformed for the better. Such a positive transformation that has occurred is a *blessing*.

How blessing is related to one's tathagata essence:

One of the factors that makes it possible for positive change in one's mind is the very nature of one's mind itself. One has heard many times how, one's mind is in the nature of clear light. This is a factual nature of one's mind itself, a reality. But such a nature of one's mind being clear light is the basis for change, that which allows change to occur. Although one needs this basis that allows for transformation in the first place, merely having this Buddha nature alone is insufficient for change to occur. This does not necessarily mean that one's mind will change for the better. One must meet with different conditions for it to occur.

How the Wisdom Truth Body is the empowering condition for the production of every virtuous thought:

In the presentation of *Mind and Awareness*, one learns that, for the generation of any consciousness, there must be the gathering of: 1) [Observed] object condition, 2) Empowering condition, as well as the 3) Immediately preceding condition. This teaching explains how the production of any consciousness is dependent on the gathering of these conditions. For example, for an eye consciousness apprehending blue to arise, one needs the objective condition [blue], the empowering condition [an eye sense power], as well as a previous moment of consciousness called the immediately preceding condition. The essential point is that, for any mental cognition to arise, many conditions must gather. Therefore, for a virtuous mind to arise, many conditions that are necessary of its manifestation must [also] gather, without which such a virtuous state of mind will not arise.

It is said that, every single virtuous thought that arises in the continuum of sentient beings is the enlightened activity of the Wisdom Truth Body. Whenever one develops a virtuous thought, this means that, one has been engaged by the enlightened activity of the Wisdom Truth Body. One has received its blessings.

If that is the case, where all the virtuous thoughts in the continua of sentient beings are the blessings of the Wisdom Truth Body, then whenever a virtuous thought arises in one, of the many conditions [that gather] for the arising of such a virtuous thought, the empowering condition would be the Wisdom Truth Body.

Stating clearly that, a disturbed mind is not the blessing of the Wisdom Truth Body:

What was mentioned in an earlier lesson was never meant to mean that, one is receiving the blessings when one's mind is disturbed by others pointing out one's faults. Having a disturbed mind is not a blessing [of the Wisdom Truth Body]. One usually gets upset when others point out one's faults. The more they do so, the more upset and angry one would get. If one gets more and more angry, that is not receiving the blessings.

The clear sign of having received the blessings:

However, as a result of someone pointing out one's faults, even though one may become uncomfortable or even feel upset, but if one actually reflects on it and realizes that such an uncomfortable or unhappy feeling that one is experiencing is actually due to the manifestation of one's own self-cherishing, seeing that it is one's own self-cherishing to be the source of one's problems, then such a *recognition, realization or acceptance is the blessing*.

It is impossible to receive any criticisms if one had not created the cause in the past. This is because, it is not possible to meet with the result of an action that one did not do. With such an understanding as a basis, when others criticize one, one can be cognizant of the main cause of such an experience in that, oneself must have committed something in the past and had accumulated the karma, that hence, one is now receiving the criticism. On the basis of knowing this as a result, if one is able to remain calm and not be affected, if one's mind is able to stay calm and relaxed as there is no one else to blame, then such a state of mind that is *calm, composed and undisturbed is the blessing*.

Through thinking about this, if one really comes to see and understand for oneself from the bottom of one's heart, that the main cause of all of one's unhappiness, problems, sufferings and so forth, lies within oneself and not outside of one, that it is one's self-cherishing attitude, then when one experiences criticisms from others, one would not be affected and blame others. This is because, one realizes that, the source ultimately lies within oneself. Hence, one does not see nor feel any need to retaliate or assign blame on others. One does not even feel uncomfortable or upset with others. This is because, *one recognizes that oneself is at fault. This is the blessing*. Hence, the very first thing to cultivate for any Mahayana mind training is to realize that, one's self-cherishing is the source and the root of all the problems. This is the first essential step to realize.

What would be the sign of having received the greatest blessing:

All the verses that have been mentioned thus far are essentially highlighting the many faults of one's self-cherishing. Due to it, one experiences this and that unhappiness and problem.

When one eventually feels from one's heart that, *one's self-cherishing is the main* trouble-maker and the *source of one's unhappiness*, I think that will be the *greatest blessing*.

If one can really see, feel and realize from one's heart that, one's self-cherishing attitude is the source of many of one's problems and difficulties, if one is also cognizant of karma in that, one will not meet with a result one did not do, then whatever such difficulties, generally considered as being criticized, scolded and so forth, that one experiences, one will always be able to stay very peaceful. This is because, it does not matter whatsoever [bad] experiences one encounters, since one has already understood and accepted that, it is really one's own faults and not someone else's, then one does not get disturbed. One may even think that such experiences are purifying one's negativities and feels wonderful about it. Such benefits come when one has such understanding.

Those who really realize that their self-cherishing is the source of all their problems, then it does not matter what befalls them. As stated in [Verses 96 & 97 of the] guru puja:

*“Even if the environment and beings are filled with the fruits of negativity,
and unwished for sufferings pour down like rain,
I seek your blessings to take these miserable conditions as a path,
by seeing them as causes to exhaust the results of my negative karma.
In short, no matter what appearances may arise, be they good or bad,
I seek your blessings to transform them into the path increasing the two bodhicittas.”*

Hence, the person who really realizes that his self-cherishing is the source of all the problems, then such a person will be able to live his life with the [attitude] mentioned in these two verses. Whatever are the undesirable experiences, such a person will be able to use it as a means for achieving enlightenment.

In fact, for such a person, the more difficulties encountered, the more blessings [he receives].

Reiterating the difference between self-cherishing and self-grasping:

Student 2: Is the emphasis of this text all about overcoming self-cherishing and not self-grasping? Where does self-cherishing come from, does it come from self-grasping or the view of the transitory collection?

Khenrinpoche: I believe that I've already addressed this issue of the relationship between self-cherishing and self-grasping. In the context of this text, the subject matter is training the mind to generate bodhicitta. Particularly, training to develop bodhicitta through exchanging self and other. The greatest obstacle to generating bodhicitta is self-cherishing. Since that is the case, one must first come to understand the faults of self-cherishing. Hence, there is so much emphasis in this text on the various faults of self-cherishing and all the problems it brings to one.

I have said before that, self-cherishing and self-grasping are not the same minds. Self-cherishing is overcome through generating bodhicitta. Self-grasping is overcome by the wisdom realizing selflessness.

In the commentaries, one finds terms like “master and slave”. Between self-cherishing and self-grasping, sometimes self-cherishing is the master while at others, self-grasping is the master. So far, based on the commentary that I am using, self-cherishing is said to be the master, while self-grasping is its slave. Later on, you will notice a change in that, self-grasping is the master while self-cherishing is the slave.

If you think about it, from one's own experience, you will find both possibilities in that, at times, one's self-grasping is the master, while the self-cherishing follows its bidding. At other times, one's self-cherishing is the master. This is because, one has both [types of minds]. One's self-cherishing and self-grasping take turn to be the “prime minister.”

How, in general, it is easier to assert self-grasping to be the master:

I did explain before, in general, it is easier to say that the master is self-grasping. It is said that, every single problem one experiences in the entire samsara has its roots in one's ignorance, which is self-grasping. Hence, one's self-cherishing arises in dependence on one's self-grasping. Whether one says it is self-grasping, the view of the transitory collection, or ignorance, even though these are not exactly the same, not one but different, but the meaning comes down to be the same.

What is the view of the transitory collection:

The view of the transitory collection is the mind which apprehends the “I” in one's own continuum, not the “I” in another's continuum, as existing inherently. This is the root of one's own samsara. This is self-grasping, ignorance. However, one has to realize that, ignorance is not necessarily the view of the transitory collection. The root of cyclic existence is ignorance, particularly self-grasping, and in particular, it is the view of the transitory collection, the mind apprehending the “I” included in one's own continuum to be existing by way of its own character. This is because, the view of the transitory collection is necessarily self-grasping, however, self-grasping is not necessarily the view of the transitory collection.

Verse 79:

**79 When someone seeks my assistance, I ignore him and secretly cause him harm. When someone agrees with me, I won't concur, but seek quarrels even at a distance. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]!
Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!**

There are times when, those one usually respects, like one's teacher and parents, may offer one good advice to help one. However, one does not pay attention to it, not only that, one may even behave contrary to what they have advised.

There are also times when others showed respect to one. At such times, one should all the more behave accordingly and reciprocate the respect. However, not only does one not reciprocate, one may even criticize and expose others' faults.

Many times, when others show their respect to one, one is unable to reciprocate the respect. This is all because of ego and pride. If one analyzes, again, one's pride comes from one's self-cherishing.

Verse 80:

**80 I do not appreciate advice and I'm always difficult to be with. Many things offend me and my clinging is always strong. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]!
Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!**

Sometimes, no matter what others may do to be on good terms with one, make one happy, please one and so forth, somehow, one still feels uncomfortable and does not accept.

One is offended easily, all it takes is for someone to do some small [disagreeable] thing, like pointing out a small fault that one may have, one becomes uncomfortable and gets upset easily.

There are also some who, after becoming offended, hold such grudges and resentments in their hearts.

This again is the fault of one's self-cherishing. The stronger one's self-cherishing is, the more difficulties one will experience. One will have more difficulties tolerating difficult situation.

Perhaps one may have felt offended when someone tells one that one has a lot of white hairs or wrinkles. These are just some examples, one gets offended [easily] because one has self-cherishing. There is actually [no real reason] for one to be upset.

Of course, if others tell one that one is fat, [then one will really get upset]. **Khenrinpoche:** I want to be fat, but somehow I can't. It's karma. Those who want to be fat remains thin, those who want to be thin always remain fat.

Since this happens to all of us, then one just needs to be aware that, even though one takes offense for different things, but there are somethings that one takes offense fairly easily. One has to try to avoid this, as well as not to hold grudges for long.

In fact, there are some who hold [grudges] in their minds for their entire lives. Even at the time of death, they are unwilling to let go. They may even make prayers to [take revenge] after dying. **Khenrinpoche:** I have personally seen this for myself.

Therefore, one has to let it go and forget about it. This is because, there is no profit to be gained, one accumulates negativities and one makes oneself unhappy.

Verse 81:

**81 I exalt myself above the high and low and consider holy people my enemies. Because my lust is great, I energetically pursue young people. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]!
Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!**

When one sees others who are studying, learning the teachings, practicing and teaching the Dharma well, one should actually feel happy for them and rejoice. But sometimes, instead of doing so, one finds faults and criticizes them.

This is definitely motivated by one's self-cherishing. Particularly for holy beings, one should and must respect them. But sometimes one despises them instead.

Because my lust is great: One can take this as having a lot of longing sexual desires. People who are pedophiles are so due to having very strong sexual desire. There are those who have partners and committed themselves to a relationship. But they may have sexual relationships with people other than their partners. All of these are the results of following self-cherishing.

Verse 82:

82 Because my friendships are of short duration, I cast aside former acquaintances. Because my new friends are many, I lay before them empty promises of enjoyment. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

One may have strong friendships with others, who are usually considered good close friends. But some misfortune may befall on one's friend, who may become very sick, poor or have many problems in life. One may then become distanced from them, purposely avoiding them.

There are some people who are very fond of cultivating new relationships and friends, wishing to make a lot of friends. One may then act and talk nicely, putting on one's best behavior.

Particularly, when one finds that a person is very rich and powerful, then one may even put in more effort to be close to him. One then does everything he wishes, talks and behaves pleasantly and so forth. All of these are again due to self-cherishing.

Verse 83:

83 Having no [clairvoyance], I eagerly resort to lying and deprecation. Having no compassion, I snatch away the confidence from others' hearts. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

There are some people who give others the impression that they have clairvoyance, wishing others to seek advice from them.

When others seek consultations, since one does not have clairvoyance, one then has to lie to others. Such giving of advice will eventually be proven wrong. When that happens, one may be confronted by [the deceived person]. Since one has to defend oneself, one then has to tell more lies.

Khenrinpoche: There was a sick person who went to seek consultation from another person, who told him: "You are sick because of eating too much meat." The sick person was a vegetarian the entire life. When told of this, the person giving the consultation has to say something: "Oh, I was not referring to this life...!"

In essence, there are people who lie about having clairvoyance. They then have to continue lying just to cover for themselves. All such faults are the results of following after self-cherishing.

Verse 84:

84 Having studied little, I wildly guess about everything. Since my religious education is slight, I have wrong views about everything. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

If one has heard very little teachings and done very little reflections, when one engages in Dharma discussions or teaches, one is unable to make a firm stand and decisively make a point. One is always making wild guesses [about the teachings].

If one does not have a deep knowledge of the teachings, not having studied nor thought about the teachings much, one would not have a wealth of scriptural sources, neither would one have an understanding that is based on all the myriad reasonings, one may then deny what others say, just because one has not seen nor known about the subject, one merely dismisses it.

This is one of the many reasons for the need to study and reflect extensively on the teachings.

When one's learning and reflections are little, one lacks the broad overall understanding of the entire Buddhadharmas that is founded on reasons and scriptural sources. When one hears something that does not fit one's mind, one may [negatively] doubt the assertion, thinking: "This cannot be."

Perhaps [such thinking] may still not be so negative. There can be a greater possibility that one may accumulate the extremely heavy negative karma of abandoning the Dharma by saying: "This is definitely not the Buddha's teachings."

When one has little learning and reflections, one has more chances of creating the negative karma of abandoning the Dharma and generating wrong views, actively denying [what is the truth].

If one has studied extensively and thought well about the teachings, one would unlikely have such wrong views and accumulate the karma of abandoning the Dharma.

Therefore, it is extremely important to have a good understanding of the entire teachings of the Buddha. There are both [divisions of] sutra and tantra. Within sutra, there are the [divisions] of the Hinayana and the Mahayana.

Above that, there is tantra. If [one lacked such overview], merely having knowledge of one vehicle, one may then criticize that a certain [division of the teachings] is not the teachings of the Buddha. Particularly, if one does not study about the defining and special characteristics of tantra, one may then develop wrong views about buddhist tantra.

There are those who only know the Hinayana teachings of the Hearers and Solitary Realizers, thinking that these are the only teachings of the Buddha. This is why they may deny that the Mahayana teachings were taught by Buddha, thus despising it.

Likewise, there are those who only know about the Hinayana and Mahayana sutra. Because they lacked understanding of buddhist tantra, without investigating, they would then deny, denigrate and criticize [buddhist] tantra.

If one studies, one would gain the understanding of at least the overview of all the Buddha's teachings as much as one can, then the chances of having wrong views of the Buddha's teachings and accumulating the extremely heavy negative karma of abandoning the Dharma is much lesser. This is one of the many reasons for the need to study the Dharma extensively.

Verses 85 & 86:

85 Habituated to attachment and aversion, I revile everyone opposed to me. Habituated to envy, I slander and deprecate others. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

86 Never studying, I despise the vast teaching. Never relying on a guru, I revile religious instruction. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

There are some who hold onto a very small teaching of Buddha and think that is it. By practicing that small portion of the instruction, they think that they can achieve realizations and enlightenment, saying: "You don't need anything else, why do you need to study? This teaching alone is enough."

They then disregard studying and learning, thinking that these are not important and are unnecessary.

There are those who are considered relatively smart, quick and intelligent. They can understand things fairly quickly and easily. Even though they can do so, yet they would say: "There is no need to receive all such oral transmissions, lineage of the commentaries and so forth." Hence, they disregard and despise such teachings.

It is extremely important to receive the blessings of the lineage, whether it is the lineage of the oral transmissions or the different lineages of the commentaries. This is because, all these lineages have been [transmitted] in an unbroken manner to the present from Buddha. Hence, there is the continuation of the blessing of the lineage.

When one receives the lineages of the oral transmissions or the commentaries, due to the blessings being imbued in the lineage, it makes a big difference to one's actualizing the paths and realizations. Hence, it is considered to be very important.

When one reaches the great level Mahayana path of accumulation, one achieves the meditative stabilization called the *Stream of Doctrine*. It is said that, when one achieves such a level, one will remember all the oral transmissions, lineages of commentaries and the teachings that one has heard. One just remembers everything.

Khenrinpoche: I wonder if there is a connection between remembering all the oral transmissions and commentaries that one has received in the past when one achieves this level with the blessings of the lineage. This is because, there is the blessing imbued in the lineage, there is the continuation of the unbroken blessing.

Personally, I wonder if one would remember anything at such a time if one has not received the lineage of blessings? I think there must be some significance and importance in receiving such lineages.

One does hear others say: "I sit down, listen and receive all such transmissions, but what is the point?" Perhaps, there must be some purpose and significance, which has to do with the blessings of the lineage.

Student 1: What is the difference between a fully qualified ultimate bodhicitta that the bodhisattva has generated on the path of seeing when compared to the ultimate bodhicitta of the seventh ground?

Khenrinpoche: Bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment, is usually divided into two: conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta. Having said that, when the word 'bodhicitta' is used, it usually refers to conventional bodhicitta. Within conventional bodhicitta/ [or simply] bodhicitta, there is the division into aspirational bodhicitta and engaged bodhicitta. When referring to the method and wisdom aspect of the path, conventional bodhicitta is the method [aspect]. In the great treatises, the definition for ultimate bodhicitta is:

An Exalted Knower in the continuum of a Mahayana Superior that is abiding as a special type of wisdom which is a subsidence of duality with respect to the final mode of abiding of complete enlightenment.

Essentially, it is an exalted knower in the continuum of a Mahayana superior that directly realizes emptiness which is included in the category of a wisdom realizer.

Perhaps the reason that bodhisattva superiors are called the ultimate sangha, is due to their ultimate bodhicitta. This is perhaps stated in some Middle Way texts. In essence, ultimate bodhicitta is not attained until one achieves the Mahayana path of seeing.

As to what was mentioned earlier about the bodhisattva necessarily realizing emptiness by the middle path of accumulation, that was only my personal opinion. As I have said before, the bodhisattva on this level would never degenerate his bodhicitta, as it has become very stable. Perhaps this may be due to it being conjoined with the realization of emptiness. Due to such a view, perhaps by the middle level of the Mahayana path of accumulation, the bodhisattva would have realized emptiness. This is merely my personal opinion.

According to the Consequence Middle Way School, whether it is the apprehension of the self of person or the apprehension of the self of phenomena, these are all necessarily afflictive obscurations, which are of two kinds, intellectually acquired and innate. The intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations are abandoned on the Mahayana path of seeing. After which, the process of abandoning the innate afflictive obscurations occur at the end of the first ground until the seventh ground. The innate afflictive obscurations are completely abandoned on the eighth ground.

This school states that, the two apprehensions have the same object of negation. These two apprehensions are not differentiated by its object of negation, rather, these two apprehensions are differentiated by their basis of emptiness. The innate conception of the apprehension of true existence has two forms, the apprehension of the self of person and the apprehension of the self of phenomena. The apprehension of a person as truly existent is the apprehension of the self of person, the apprehension of the aggregates, for example, as truly existent, is the apprehension of the self of phenomena. These two are not abandoned until the eighth ground. This means that, there are instances of such apprehensions all the way up to the seventh ground.

This has been explained in the presentation of the paths and grounds. The process of abandoning the different levels of the innate afflictive obscurations happen over a period of time, starting from the end of the first ground up to the seventh ground. There are the different levels of the innate afflictive obscurations, some more coarse than others, [that are all abandoned on these grounds]. Whether it is the apprehension of the self of person or the apprehension of the self of phenomena, the subtlest forms of both are abandoned by the uninterrupted path at the last moment on the seventh ground. The uninterrupted path during the last moment of the seventh ground is the direct antidote to the subtlest forms of the apprehensions of the self of persons and self of phenomena. When these two are abandoned, one achieves the path of release of the eighth ground.

Continuing with Verse 86:

<p><i>86 Never studying, I despise the vast teaching. Never relying on a guru, I revile religious instruction. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</i></p>
<p>One should therefore engage in extensive learning. This is because, there are many times that people would accumulate the heavy negative karma of abandoning the Dharma due to not having studied the Buddha's teachings extensively.</p>
<p>In the teachings, there is a text which summarizes Lama Tsongkhapa's life story. There is a verse in which he said:</p>
<p><i>“At the beginning, I strove to learn extensively. In the middle, all the great treatises appear as instructions to be practiced. In the end, I practiced day and night. All the merits that I have accumulated from all of these, I dedicate it to the flourishing of Buddha's teachings.”</i></p>
<p>This quote encapsulates Lama Tsongkhapa's practice and the story of his entire life.</p>

In the <i>Stages of the path literature</i> , there is the teaching on the <i>Four Greatnesses of the Lam Rim</i> . One of these is that, if one understands the whole path structure of the Lam Rim, one would realize that, all the teachings of the Buddha are not contradictory. This is its great advantage of knowing the Lam Rim.
The fourth greatness is that, one would automatically refrain from great misdeeds. This refers to the very heavy negative karma of abandoning the teachings. If one has learnt the entire Buddha's teachings well, then one would automatically be protected from this great misdeed.
Even till today, one can see many people who hold onto views about some portion of the Buddha's teachings being good and some are not as good. In fact, there are some who believe and even say that: "The Mahayana teachings are no good, the real Buddha's teachings are [found in] the Pali Canon or in the Hinayana teachings."
There are others who say that: "The Mahayana teachings are the best. If you practice the Mahayana, you don't need to bother about the teachings of the Pali Canon/ Hinayana."
Essentially, they make such statements due to the lack of understanding, as they themselves do not see the point nor understand the teaching. What they are essentially saying is that, there are some teachings of the Buddha which is no good.
This is the extremely heavy negative karma of abandoning the teachings of Buddha.
Hence, this verse says: <i>Never studying, I despise the vast teaching</i> . Such negative karma of abandoning the Buddha's teachings is due to the lack of learning and understanding.
Hence, one should try as much as possible to follow after the example of Lama Tsongkhapa, where he said: <i>"At the beginning, I sought out extensive learning."</i>

Verse 87:

<i>87 Instead of explaining the scriptures, I falsely set up my own system. Not having mastered pure vision, I curse and yell. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</i>
<i>Instead of explaining the scriptures, I falsely set up my own system:</i> Whenever one explains and teaches the teachings of the Buddha, whatever is being said must accord with His intent and the intent of the Three Scriptural Collections.
This verse says that, even though there are those who want to teach, but they have not learnt extensively enough. Still, they wish to say something. Since they do not know what to say, they would fabricate teachings based on their own limited experiences on what happened to them or what they saw in their meditations or dreams, making it up as they explain things.
This occurs due to self-cherishing. At the beginning of the Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Lam Rim Chen Mo, Lama Tsongkhapa mentions the qualification of someone who wishes to be a guru to others:
<i>The entire point of being a guru is to subdue, pacify and discipline the minds of others. But before one can act and play the role of being a guru, one's own mind must be disciplined, subdued and pacified first.</i>
Lama Tsongkhapa said this in this text very clearly: <i>Those who have not disciplined themselves have no basis for disciplining others.</i>
If that is the case, then what would be the way to subdue one's mind? The way to do so is not simply ascribing realization to any kind of experiences one may gain from merely performing any kind of practice. He continues by saying:
<i>It is not helpful for them to have done just any practice, and then have the result designated as a good quality of knowledge.</i>
[The reason he said these is that,] people may have their own ideas of how to subdue their minds [and then declare that to others]: "I am subdued." He says that one cannot ascribe realizations to just any experiences one may gain from any practice.
He says that the manner of subduing and disciplining the mind must accord with the general procedure of the Buddhadharma: <i>They need a way to discipline the mind that accords with the general teachings of the Conqueror.</i>
This means that: One's mind must be subdued through the [sequential] practice of the Three Higher Trainings of ethical discipline, concentration and wisdom: <i>The three precious trainings are definitely such a way.</i>
In just these few sentences, Lama Tsongkhapa [summarizes] a very important topic into them.
Hence, in this verse 87, it says that, in reality, if one is teaching and explaining the Buddhadharma, one's explanation must accord with what is found in the Three Scriptural Collections.
<i>Not having mastered pure vision:</i> The entire purpose of teaching others is to help them gain an understanding of the Dharma. Instead of this, one may use the teachings as an indirect way of criticizing, scolding or hurting them.
This occur again due to self-cherishing.

Verse 88:

<p>88 Without condemning [non-dharmic] activities, I launch numerous criticisms against all the [good explanations of] Buddha's words. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</p>
<p>In reality, one should condemn non-dharmic activities, which are nonvirtues. Not only does one not do that, due to one's self-cherishing, one even voluntarily engages in such nonvirtuous activities.</p>
<p>There are many excellent explanations of the Buddha's teachings which are in accord with His intent. This is something one should undertake and learn. Instead of doing so, one may even end up criticizing these excellent teachings and explanations.</p>
<p>This is again due to one's self-cherishing.</p>

Verse 89:

<p>89 Having no shame about things I should be ashamed of, I am perversely ashamed of the Dharma, which is not something shameful. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</p>
<p>In reality, one should be ashamed of engaging in nonvirtue, however, many times one is happily engaging in it.</p>
<p>Due to the practice of Dharma, if others choose to live a simple and contented life, in reality, these are occasions in which one should really rejoice. Instead, one regards them as failures of society and being incapable, hence choosing such a life.</p>

Verse 90:

<p>90 [I never engage in whatever is appropriate to be engaged in]; everything I do is inappropriate. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, [evil thought]! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!</p>
<p>This verse is the concluding summary of all the previous verses. One does not engage in all that are appropriate to be engaged in. Whatever that are inappropriate, one engages in them all.</p>
<p>What one needs and wishes is actually the real, eternal, everlasting bliss and happiness. The cause of this has to be virtue. However, it is said that one has never engaged even in a single virtue.</p>
<p>Such an everlasting happiness of bliss is only possible if one achieves either the liberation from cyclic existence or full enlightenment. Without these, there is no real everlasting happiness to speak of.</p>
<p>To achieve liberation, whatever actions that one does, especially those actions to achieve liberation, these must be conjoined with renunciation before it can be a cause for liberation, a form of everlasting highest happiness.</p>
<p>For actions, including one's virtues, to be a cause for everlasting happiness of full enlightenment, one's actions must be motivated by the mind of enlightenment</p>
<p>If one really reflects well and honestly examines one's own mind, so far, one has not accumulated a single virtue that will enable one to achieve liberation or enlightenment.</p>
<p>The verse that is usually recited at the beginning of every lesson says: <i>Do not commit any nonvirtuous actions, perform only perfect virtuous actions, subdue your mind thoroughly – This is the teaching of the Buddha.</i></p>
<p>For any virtue to even qualify as a perfect virtue, all of one's actions must not be motivated by the attachment to this life's happiness, as well as any attachment to future lives' happiness.</p>
<p>Hence, the minimum qualification for a virtue to be perfect has to be renunciation. The activity must be motivated by the generation of renunciation. Hence, [this shows] that one would not have any perfect virtue.</p>
<p>If one honestly analyzes and checks, there is really nothing one can point to and say: "That was a perfect virtue, a cause for my liberation or enlightenment." The reason one is in such a state is again due to one's self-cherishing.</p>
<p>One has to check oneself to see, whether one has accumulated any perfect virtue, a cause for liberation or not. For something to be a cause for liberation, it must not be motivated by any attachment to this life or even to future lives' happiness.</p>
<p>Even the virtue one engages in seeking the happiness of future lives is not a perfect virtue, since it is not a cause for liberation.</p>
<p>Even if one does manage to achieve a rebirth as a human or a celestial being, such rebirths have not transcended the nature of suffering, samsara. Hence, the virtue, which is a cause of a human or a celestial being rebirth cannot be a perfect virtue.</p>
<p>What one does not wish are problems and sufferings. The cause of all these is none other than nonvirtue. Although this is the cause of suffering, one instinctively and naturally takes to it. One effortlessly follows after it day and night.</p>

Hence, this verse is essentially a summary of what all the previous verses have mentioned:
<i>What one wishes is happiness, but one has never accumulated any perfect virtue, the cause for happiness. What one does not wish is suffering, but one is always accumulating nonvirtues, the cause for suffering.</i>
Hence, one is one's own creator of one's own suffering. The concluding reason one is in such a situation, living one's life this way, is essentially the same, which is due to one's self-cherishing.
Since that is the case, then the conclusion must be that, one must do something about one's self-cherishing and destroy it.

Verse 91:

<i>91 Aha! You whose strength is that of the [Dharmakaya] of the Sugata who conquers the demon of [self-grasping], you wielder of the staff, the weapon of the wisdom of selflessness, turn it over [my] head three times, without hesitation!</i>
<i>Aha:</i> “Ema” in Tibetan, is an expression of [wonderful] amazement. This is because, for the first time, one has finally seen the faults, mistakes and disadvantages of one's self-cherishing attitude.
Here, the author Dharmaraksita and his disciple, Lama Atisha, will of course say “Ema”. But for one, whether there are any reasons to express amazement or not is something that remains to be seen.
In the commentary, <i>the demon of self-grasping</i> here refers to the apprehension of the self. It is from such an apprehension that self-cherishing arises. It is the wrathful Yamantaka who possesses the power to vanquish this demon of self-grasping.

Explanation of the divisions of Sugata, the One Gone to Bliss:

<i>Sugata:</i> Refers to the One Gone to Bliss. I did explain this meaning at the beginning of <i>Engaging in bodhisattva deeds</i> . This is the abandonment Sugata and the realizational Sugata. The Sugata here refers to the <i>Abandonment Sugata</i> .
The A) Abandonment Sugata possesses three features: 1) Good abandonment, 2) Irreversible abandonment and 3) Complete abandonment . In the context of tathagata essence, such an abandonment that possesses these three features refers to the nature body of adventitious purity.
The true cessation in the continuum of a Buddha superior is an example of the 1) Good abandonment . This is because, it is an abandonment that surpasses the non-buddhists' abandonment of the afflictions up the formless realm level of nothingness.
Such non-buddhists are able to suppress the afflictions even up to the afflictions included in the realm of nothingness, the third of the four levels of the formless realms [by this, they are able to abide on the peak of cyclic existence]. The quality of abandonment in the continuum of Buddha superior is far superior to such an abandonment.
Such a particular feature of the Buddha shows that our founder Buddha, as a teacher, is far superior to the [founder] teachers of the non-buddhists. This is because, He has totally abandoned all the afflictions, even the afflictions of the peak of cyclic existence, the highest possible state of existence in samsara. From this, one sees how He is a far superior teacher than them.
This is because, there are non-buddhists who also cultivate and achieve calm abiding. On the basis of that, they achieve a mundane special insight. Based on that, they can 'abandon' the afflictions up to the afflictions of the level of nothingness.
However, to abandon the afflictions of the peak of cyclic existence, one necessarily needs to generate a supramundane path.
2) Irreversible abandonment: For example, the abandonment achieved by the stream-enterer is an abandonment. But this is not an irreversible abandonment.
Although they have achieved a superior's path of the path of seeing, thus achieving an abandonment, but such an abandonment is not an irreversible abandonment. This is because, they still have to take rebirth in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions. Hence, such an abandonment is not an irreversible abandonment.
Good abandonment distinguishes Buddha as a teacher who is far superior than the non-buddhist teachers. Irreversible abandonment distinguishes the Buddha as vastly superior to the stream-enterers.
3) Complete abandonment: This shows that the Buddha is superior to the Hearer and Solitary Realizer arhats.
Although the Hearers and Solitary Realizer arhats have abandoned the afflictive obscurations, but they have yet to abandon the knowledge obscurations. This is in contrast to Buddha, who has already abandoned them. Hence, such an abandonment in the continuum of Buddha superior is a complete abandonment.
The abandonment which is a true cessation in the continuum of Buddha superior possesses these three features. From this, one can see the qualities of Buddha. Hence, such an abandonment is a perfect abandonment.

B) Realizational sugata: This also has three features. In the eight qualities of the Buddha Jewel taught in <i>Tathagata Essence</i> , there is the quality of knowledge, which is the knowledge of the modes and varieties of phenomena.
Such a knower has three features: 1) Knowing thusness, 2) Stable knowing, and 3) Complete knowing.
1) Knowing thusness: This refers to the exalted knower in the Buddha's continuum directly realizing emptiness. This shows that Buddha is a far superior teacher to other [non-buddhist teachers].
2) Stable knowing: Distinguishes Buddha as the exalted knower that is far superior to that of the exalted knower in the continua of stream-enterers. This means that, the wisdom directly realizing emptiness in the continuum of a stream-enterer, for example, is not stable. Perhaps this is due to them not having abandoned the innate view of the transitory collection.
When referring to an exalted knower that directly realizes emptiness as being stable or not, this does not mean that the direct realization of emptiness will change.
3) Complete knowing: This distinguishes the exalted knower in the Buddha's continuum to be far exalted than the knowers in the continua of both the Hearers and Solitary Realizers' arhats.
These two types of arhats do not realize the paths of all the three vehicles. This is due to them not having generated such paths in their continua. In contrast, the Buddha has full knowledge of the three vehicles and is able to act as a teacher to the trainees of all three vehicles. He can thus show the path and guide the respective trainees to their respective attainments.

How the two levels of Yamantaka act as antidotes to self-grasping and self-cherishing:

There are the two levels of Yamantaka: definitive and interpretive Yamantaka. The definitive Yamantaka is the realizational sugata, which acts as the direct antidote to the demon of the egoistic view, self-grasping.
This realizational sugata's appearance in the aspect of the form of Yamantaka is the interpretive Yamantaka, who is the possessor of the ability of the definitive Yamantaka, the direct antidote to the demon of self-grasping.
The wisdom directly realizing selflessness of Yamantaka is likened to the skull-staff which is used to destroy the enemy. Likewise, such a wisdom directly realizing selflessness is that which overcomes the self-grasping.
This weapon of the skull-staff is turned over one's head three times. Through that, the enemy is destroyed. Likewise, through using the <i>wisdom directly realizing selflessness</i> , one destroys the a) <i>self-grasping</i> , the b) <i>self-cherishing which arises from it</i> , and the c) <i>contaminated appropriated aggregates which arise from self-cherishing</i> .
This is the meaning of <i>turn [the skull staff] over my head three times.</i>

How, in general, the practice of Exchanging Self and Other is far superior than the practice of Seven-fold cause and effect instruction:

Student 1: Would it be the case that the method of developing bodhicitta through the Seven-fold cause and effect instruction is more powerful than that of Exchanging self and other?

For each individual, what the most appropriate practice is, all depends on one's own level of spiritual development:

Khenrinpoche: If the Seven-point mind training suits you better, starting with recognizing that all sentient beings have been your mother, then you just have to proceed with that. If through meditating on Exchanging self and other will cause your self-cherishing to increase, then don't do it.

Hence, everything depends on where individually, one's level of practice and capacity is at. Whatever practice one does, it has to accord with one's capacity. This is because, for some people, the meditation on impermanence is stronger than whatever meditation on emptiness [they may have]. Their meditation on impermanence, for example, helps them to reduce their attachment.

Therefore, whatever practice one does, it has to be appropriate for and dependent on one's own level of mind. Hence, it is a very personal issue. For example, to help a person recover from his sickness, one cannot merely give him any medicine. Even if it is claimed to be the best, most famous and powerful, this does not mean that such a medicine is necessarily effective for every individual. To cure a person of his sickness, the appropriate [type and] dosage of medicine has to be given. It is the same for one's practice. It all depends on one's level of mind and where one is at [in one's spiritual development].

In one of the verses of this text, it says that one runs after all the high practices that are way beyond one's ability. For example, in the teachings on the greatneses of the Mahayana teachings, where it states how wonderful training the mind of love, compassion and bodhicitta are, and so forth, this is taught from the perspective of the Mahayana, for a person who is ready for that. In general, this is true, but there is no way to even start training the mind in the Mahayana without having laid the proper *foundation*. Without having trained and actualized the path of the persons of small capacity, one has no basis whatsoever to even start to train in the Mahayana. Without any basis/ foundation, if one were to start training in the Mahayana, although in general one can say it is the best and the most wonderful [practice], but until one possesses the foundation, it will not be the best [practice] for oneself at this moment in time.

The Seven-fold cause and effect instruction is so called, because there are seven aspects that forms the practice. This starts from recognizing all sentient beings as having been one's mother, remembering their kindnesses, developing the wish to repay their kindnesses, developing affectionate love, compassion and so forth. One has to train one's mind in stages gradually.

Stating the reasons that the practice of Exchanging Self and Other is more powerful:

In the practice of Exchanging self and other, the very first step is to Equalize self and other. To develop a deep, profound understanding and practice of this latter [instruction], one would probably need to think and reflect on emptiness, the ultimate nature of reality.

For the sharp-facultied trainees, when they train their minds to develop bodhicitta through the practice of Exchanging self and other, due to their sharp knowledge and understanding, having a vast base of information, they will naturally understand that *no phenomena exist inherently, that samsara has no beginning, because the mind has no beginning*. Since this is so, then it is definitely the case that, *all sentient beings have been one's mother*. All such understanding naturally come. For such a trainee training in such a method, his understanding and realizations that all sentient beings have been one's mother, remembering their kindnesses, developing the wish to repay their kindnesses, developing affectionate love, considering all sentient beings as very precious, will all come naturally in their reflections.

As mentioned recently, the sharp-facultied trainees' understanding of the ultimate nature of reality can positively affect their practices of Equalizing self and others. Due to their understanding of emptiness, they understand the clear light nature of the mind, the Buddha nature. They understand how the defilements are adventitious. This forms a basis for them to have very strong compassion for sentient beings. They realize that the minds of all sentient beings, including their own, are actually pure by nature, which have never been afflicted by delusions. Yet the delusions are there, albeit temporary and adventitious. Such adventitious defilements can be removed, but yet due to these, oneself and others have been suffering since beginningless lifetimes for no good reason, merely because of such adventitious defilements. Hence, when such trainees contemplate how others are in such a position for no real reason, then of course their love and compassion that come from such an understanding are very strong. The strength of such love and compassion are probably not induced by mere reflection on how sentient beings have been one's mothers, how one wishes to repay their kindnesses and so forth.

Hence, those with the realization of emptiness can see that all problems and sufferings arose from ignorance, believing in something which has never been there, that there is actually no basis [for the grasping of the mind of ignorance]. All the problems and sufferings come just because of such a mistake in the mind, the erroneous mistaken fundamental misapprehension of reality. This is why, those trainees who have such an understanding of emptiness, when they place their minds in developing compassion, their compassion that they develop is very strong.

For such trainees, when they place their attention on the suffering of all sentient beings, not only do they see suffering, they see that all the sufferings that sentient beings have been experiencing since beginningless lifetimes have no basis whatsoever. Hence, in a sense, they see that sentient beings are actually suffering for nothing, merely a [basic] mistake. Yet, due to such a fundamental mistake of ignorance, that oneself and others have been suffering since beginningless lifetimes, this induces a very strong compassion in their minds when they train their minds in compassion. Such a strong compassion in turn induces a wholehearted resolve, thinking: "I must do something to help them." Such a wholehearted resolve in turn induces the development of bodhicitta, concluding that: "I must achieve full enlightenment to help them."

Therefore, there is the compassion that arises due to having contemplated on how every sentient being has been one's mother, remembering their kindnesses, developing the wish to repay their kindnesses, developing affectionate love and then great compassion. Such a compassion does arise [from such contemplations]. But if one compares the strength of this compassion that has been induced through training the mind in the first four steps of the Seven-fold cause and effect instruction, with the compassion that arises from training the mind in Exchanging self and other, one will see clearly which one is stronger.

Prior to training the mind in the Seven-fold cause and effect instruction, one must meditate on and develop equanimity. In this context, [such a meditation] is to remove any sense of biases, feeling close to some and distant from others. Such a cultivation is necessary.

Student 2: It was taught that there is the virtue that is conjoined with renunciation and the virtue that is not, what is the difference between a virtue not conjoined with renunciation and a nonvirtue? What are their impacts on karma?

Khenrinpoche: In general, virtue is that which gives rise to a pleasant result, a nonvirtue is that which gives rise to an unpleasant result. One can engage in different kinds of virtue, such as giving and so forth, to achieve a good rebirth in the future as a human or a celestial being. Such practices are all virtues and not nonvirtues. But the question is that, is such a virtue a perfect virtue or not?

What makes a virtue a perfect virtue?

A perfect virtue is that which is a cause for liberation from cyclic existence.

For something to be a cause for liberation from cyclic existence, such a cause must be conjoined with the determination to be free/ renunciation. This is what I think.

In the prayers one recites before class, there is the verse which states:

***Do not commit any nonvirtuous actions, perform only perfect virtuous actions, subdue your mind thoroughly –
This is the teaching of the Buddha.***

The first sentence, **Do not commit any nonvirtuous actions**, is essentially a presentation of virtue. Not committing nonvirtue is a practice of virtue. Perhaps one can relate this to the practice of the person of small capacity.

Perform only perfect virtuous actions: This means that, it is not sufficient just to engage in virtue, which is implied by the first sentence. One must engage in perfect virtue. This is because, without engaging in perfect virtue, one would not be able to achieve liberation from cyclic existence. Hence, [mere] virtue alone is not sufficient to be a cause for liberation from cyclic existence, it has to be perfect virtue, a virtue which is conjoined with the determination to be free from cyclic existence. Hence, perhaps this second sentence could indicate the practice of the person of middling capacity.

Subdue your mind thoroughly: Perhaps this may indicate the practice of the persons of great capacity in that, to achieve full enlightenment, one must subdue one's mind completely. This can perhaps mean that, one must vanquish and overcome self-cherishing. To achieve mere liberation is also not sufficient, to accomplish the perfect fulfillment of one's goal, particularly, to accomplish the perfect fulfillment of the goals of others, one must achieve omniscience, full enlightenment. To do so, one must subdue one's mind thoroughly in that, one must first vanquish and overcome one's self-cherishing. One can understand this sentence to mean overcoming the two obscurations, the afflictive obscurations and knowledge obscurations.

Verse 92:

*92 I pray you, kill [& liberate] the enemy with your fierce wrath! I pray you, subdue my evil thinking with your great wisdom! I pray you, protect me from my evil actions with your great compassion!
I pray you, destroy this Ego once and for all!*

This is a verse of request to Yamantaka to destroy without any hesitation one's self-cherishing and self-grasping.

The real meaning of *Tonglen* practice:

Verse 93:

93 However much suffering those in cyclic existence may endure, I pray you, heap it surely upon ego-clinging! However many of the five poisonous afflictions anyone may experience, I pray you, heap them surely upon this [self-grasping], which richly deserves them!

This verse is a request to the deity Yamantaka to [bestow the] practice of taking on the suffering of all sentient beings and direct it at one's self-grasping.

As mentioned before, prior to doing any practices of *tonglen*, the practice of taking on the sufferings of others and giving one's happiness to them, one must have thought and reflected well on the faults of self-cherishing.

Until one develops such a firm conviction from the depths of one's hearts that, one's self-cherishing is one's real enemy and the cause of all of one's problems of this life, as well as all the sufferings one has experienced since beginningless lifetimes, the practice of *tonglen* will not work.

Hence, one necessarily needs to have such a realization, of how terrible one's self-cherishing is, how it is one's real enemy and how it has been harming one since beginningless lifetimes.

It is only with such a heartfelt realization that, one [would be able] to take on the suffering and its causes, of sentient beings in the form of poisons and so forth, and then heap and throw them onto one's self-cherishing.

One who has the realization of the faults of self-cherishing due to having reflected well on its faults from all angles, would on that basis, be able to do the practice of *tonglen*, taking on the suffering of others.

When such a person meets with problems in life, like sicknesses and so forth, instead of [feeling mental] suffering, they would feel very happy. This is because, they would think: "My wishes and prayers have come true!"

Rather than feeling depressed and upset, they would feel even more happy [and welcome more of such experiences].

When such persons do the visualization of taking on the sufferings of others, such practices are not merely [paying lip service] as they do actually mean it, wishing from the depths of their hearts [for the visualization to come true].

Since they have already been seeking for it so much, therefore, when something 'bad' or obstacles occur to them, they would really feel happy, as this is [a wish come true] for them.

For oneself, one is not like that at all. Not to mention meditating on *tonglen*, even when one is asked to meditate and think about *tonglen*, one is already so fearful: "If I were to meditate on it, what sort of bad experiences will happen to me?"

Without even starting to do the practice, one is already having all such worries and fears.

While such a practice is the highest and best method for training the mind to overcome self-cherishing, but as to whether such a practitioner can actually take on the sufferings of others or not is another question altogether.

If one thinks about it, it is rather difficult to justify and prove that a sincere practice of taking on the sufferings of others does actually result in one actually experiencing those sufferings in reality.

Khenrinpoche: What do you think? Is it possible for the person who does the practice of taking on the sufferings of others sincerely really able to take on the sufferings of others, like freeing others from cancer or spirit harms?

Such a practice of the visualization of taking on the sufferings of others and heaping them onto one's self-cherishing is a method for reducing the power and strength of one's self-cherishing. The point is to eventually overcome it.

Such a practice of taking on the sufferings of others is a method to increase one's compassion. For a person who has trained his mind in developing bodhicitta and who has the mind of compassion, such practices are not mere talk as he really does want sentient beings to be free of suffering. This is his goal.

Since this is what motivates him, hence when he is doing the visualization of taking on the sufferings of others, he really does mean [what he is visualizing], having no qualms about [experiencing] those sufferings.

However many of the five poisonous afflictions anyone may experience, I pray you, heap them surely upon this self-grasping: The visualization for this is the same. It is just that, the [first sentence] is the teaching on taking on the [resultant] *sufferings* of all sentient beings.

Here, one is taking on the [causal] *afflictions* of all sentient beings, the causes of their sufferings like their ignorance, anger, attachment, jealousy, pride as well as all of their [dormant karmic tendencies] and throws them onto one's self-grasping.

Verse 94:

94 Although through reasoning I have identified without a doubt all the [faults] of evil, if you judge that I am still abetting them, I pray you to destroy the holder himself!

This verse is saying that, even if one has recognized and acknowledged the faults of self-cherishing, but if one is still following one's old ways, giving in to one's self-cherishing, then [one beseeches Yamantaka] to please destroy one.

How should one understand this verse? It says **I pray you to destroy the holder himself!** However, one cannot and should not do so. Is it alright if one were to destroy oneself?

Khenrinpoche: I am not exactly very clear about this last sentence. Perhaps you can think about its meaning. What do you think it is?

It is clearly [stated] in the teachings, for example, in *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*, that one should not put the blame on sentient beings, but directly on the afflictions. One should view the afflictions as the enemy, but sentient beings must always be viewed with compassion. Hence, it is clear that one should not be destroying anyone, including oneself.

Verse 95:

95 Now, [put] all blame onto one! I shall [meditate on the great kindnesses of] all beings, take into my mind what others abhor, and [dedicate] the roots of my virtue to all beings.

Put all blame onto one! This is essentially the summary: If one wishes to assign blame for whatever problems and sufferings one is experiencing, then there is only one thing to blame, that is one's self-cherishing, never something or someone else.

I shall [meditate on the great kindnesses of] all beings: The teachings say that, every single experience of one's happiness arises in dependence on other sentient beings. Hence, in this sense, all sentient beings are kind.

One should therefore meditate on the great kindnesses of all beings.

When one meets with problems, sufferings and difficult situations, one always puts the blame on someone or something else out there other than oneself. This is what one does and believes in.

Here, the teaching is telling one to reconsider [one's view] carefully. It is telling one not to [think in such ways], as the faults are not outside [oneself], but [directly] inside oneself.

Hence, if one wishes to blame [one's suffering experiences on something], then there is only one thing to blame, one's selfishness, one's self-cherishing. This is what the teachings are telling one.

For someone who has reflected on the faults of self-cherishing, as well as the advantages of cherishing others from many different angles, such a person would then be able to take on what others do not desire, all of others' problems, sufferings and their causes, onto himself. Such a person would always be dedicating his merits/ roots of virtue for the happiness of others.

Verse 96:

96 Just as the [vibrancy] of colors in a peacock's feather is due to poison, may the afflictions be transformed into the aids to enlightenment by my taking on the physical, verbal, and mental deeds of other living beings, past, present, and future.

This verse is describing the way to take on all the physical, verbal and mental karma of all sentient beings, as well as their afflictions, onto oneself.

Just as the color of the feathers of peacocks become more vibrant from their ingesting poisons, likewise, one makes a prayer that, through taking on the physical, verbal, mental karma and the afflictions of all sentient beings of the past, present and future, may this not be an obstacle for oneself. Rather, may this be a cause for one to achieve enlightenment quickly.

Here, one is making the prayer and generating the aspiration to be able to take on the negativities and afflictions of all sentient beings in that, [one prays for this to] become a cause for one to quickly achieve full enlightenment.

Verse 97:

97 I give the roots of my virtue to living beings so they may be cured, as a poisoned crow is healed by medicine. I dedicate my life to the liberation of all beings so they may quickly achieve the buddhahood of the Sugata!

This is a way to make a wish in that, those sentient beings whose roots of virtue are severed, whose merits have been depleted, [one is wishing] for their merits be [replenished, by virtue of] the dedication of one's merits to them.

In the analogy of [healing] a poisoned crow, who is on the verge of dying after ingesting poison, one saves it from [imminent] death by giving it medication and help it to recover slowly.

Here, one makes the prayer in that, as a result of the dedication of one's merit to all sentient beings, may they quickly generate the conventional and ultimate bodhicitta. Through that, [may they quickly] achieve enlightenment.

Verse 98:

98 Until I and those who have been my parents have attained enlightenment in the Highest Realm, may we support each other with a single thought, even when wandering about in the six states of existence owing to our actions.

Here, one makes a prayer, wishing that through one's practice, may one and all of one's father and mother sentient beings achieve enlightenment together in the [highest pure land of] *Akanista*.

Until then, oneself and all sentient beings would have to take numerous rebirths in cyclic existence. Hence, one prays that, in all such rebirths:

**May oneself and others be free of attachment and hatred, support one another and be close to one another.
May oneself and others provide mutual support for each other to quickly achieve bodhicitta.**

Verse 99:

99 When I enter the three wretched states of existence for the sake of even one living being, may I save him or her from the suffering of that wretched destiny without compromising a great being's way of life.

Here, one is making a prayer that, while one is on the path to enlightenment, practicing the bodhisattva deeds, even when there is the need to enter the lower realms to benefit just one sentient being, may one do so enthusiastically, willingly and happily, just as how one would readily go to a party or a picnic.

This prayer says that, when one is actually in the midst of the lower realms benefiting sentient beings, may such situations never cause one's bodhicitta to degenerate. May one be the one who leads them out of those lower realms.

Those persons who have very strong compassion would actually make such prayers and mean it. They are happy to go to the lower realms if there is benefit. Even if it was to save just one being, they would do it.

Having said that, if one really has such an aspiration, then does one need to fear having to experience the actual suffering of the lower realms? The commentaries say that there is no need to have such fears.

For example, motivated by very strong compassion, one makes the strong prayer really meaning to go to the lowest of the hells, the avici hell, to benefit sentient beings. **Khenrinpoche:** Do you think such strong prayers would be actualized?

The answer is this: Not only would one not go to the hells, which is where one wishes to go, one would even end up going to the pure lands, which is where one did not wish to go. **Khenrinpoche:** Did you understand the answer?

Verses 100 to 103:

100 At that very instant, the guards of hell will realize that I am a guru, and their weapons will turn into a rain of flowers. May peace flourish unharmed!

**101 Even those in wretched states of existence shall obtain [clairvoyance] and [dharani], assume the bodies of gods and men, and generate bodhicitta. In return for my kindness, may they repay me with Dharma practice!
Taking me as their guru, may they properly [devote to] me!**

102 Then, may all the beings in higher realms also deeply meditate on selflessness, just as I do, cultivating the nonconceptual meditative absorption on the [aspects of samsara and nirvana]. May they recognize this identity!

103 Having done so I will crush the enemy. Having done so I will crush conceptual construction. After cultivating selflessness through nonconceptual wisdom, how can I not obtain the causes and effects of the form body?

All the verses up to 102 explain the practices of cultivating bodhicitta through overcoming self-cherishing by means of the method of *Exchanging Self and Other*. This is done on the basis of realizing the faults of self-cherishing and the advantages of cherishing others. Verses from 103 onward explain the practices of ultimate bodhicitta.

It is not possible to achieve enlightenment through cultivating conventional bodhicitta alone. One must also cultivate ultimate bodhicitta. In fact, one must practice a combination of these two in order to achieve enlightenment.

Student 1: In the description of clear light, what does 'luminous' mean?

Khenrinpoche: The mind is defined as that which is clear and knowing or luminous and aware. Perhaps one can think of luminous or clear in terms of the clear light nature of the mind in that, the afflictions have never abided in the nature of the mind. Maybe it is easier if one can think of examples or analogies, for example, the nature of water is that it is clear.

If one thinks about the clear light nature of the mind from the perspective of tantra, then in the extremely subtle mind, the afflictions have never abided in the nature of such a mind. Such an extremely subtle mind is covered by the coarser levels of consciousnesses. When the coarser levels of minds dissolve, they all dissolve into this extremely subtle mind. When one arises from this extremely subtle mind, there is the mind of *Black near attainment* of the reverse order, followed by the mind of *Red increase* of the reverse order, followed by the mind of *White appearance* of the reverse order.

Essentially, [all minds dissolve] into the [mind of] clear light. When one arises from this clear light [mind], coarser levels of consciousness come into being, starting with the mind of *Black near attainment*, *Red increase*, *White attainment* and so forth, becoming increasingly coarser. The extremely subtle mind has the power to cognize any object, including the emptiness of inherent existence. According to the explanation of tantra, it is through cognizing emptiness with such an extremely subtle mind, that one achieves enlightenment.

If one understands the clear light nature of the mind and relate it to the extremely subtle mind according to the explanation of tantra, then perhaps it is easier to understand.

Student 1: Is it really possible to take on the sufferings of others and [replenish] their merits?

Khenrinpoche: That was actually my question [from the previous class]. So what's your answer?

Student 1: I think it's not possible, as the sufferings of people come from their own karma. Hence, [the practice of dedicating merits to them] is good for developing bodhicitta, but does it really work?

Khenrinpoche: Are you asking me about my question? You should ask a different question [instead of] asking [my question back to me]!

Student 2: For someone who has high realization, such a person may be able to do that, for example, Lama Konchog. If one still have self-cherishing and have fears about the ripening results of doing *Tonglen*, can one just cultivate half of it, merely the giving?

Khenrinpoche: The point is, when you [practice] giving [in Tonglen], will others receive [what you give in your practice]?

Student 2: If you have a close connection with the person, for example, one's parents, if one does prayers or pujas for them, they would receive the merit. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has said many times before that, if one prays for the long life of one's gurus, due to the power of the guru-disciple relationship, there is definitely some benefit.

Khenrinpoche: When you add the word *Tong* to *Pa*, then it becomes 'empty'!

Student 3: I disagree with [Student 2]. This is because, one of the characteristics of karma states that, one would not receive the results of what one did not create. There is also a verse which says that Buddha does not wash away the sins of others, neither would He be able to transfer His merits to others. One has to then explain how dedication works. If not, one would have a problem [reconciling] between dedication and auspicious verses/ prayers.

In the end, I don't think that one can actually give away one's merits, it merely creates the condition for the recipient's own merits to ripen. Similarly, in [cultivating] taking, this causes one's own negative karma to ripen so one can purify negativities as well as accumulate more merits due to the attitude of taking.

Student 4: [What about the story of a Lama practicing *Tonglen* who then experienced the pain of a dog near him who was hit by someone?] Also, when one practices *Tonglen* near a dying person, would that not help that dying person generate a virtuous mind?

Khenrinpoche: I mentioned before about some of the prayers that bodhisattvas make. Due to their bodhicitta, courage and determination to benefit sentient beings, even for the sake of one sentient being, they are willing to stay in the hells for a very long period of time just to benefit that one sentient being. Such are the determination, courage and intentions.

In fact, they make all such big prayers [of proclamation] to achieve that. However, these prayers somehow do not work. Even though they have the wish and make prayers to go to the lower realms to benefit even just one sentient being, but somehow they never get born there.

Due to the force of their courage and determination to benefit sentient beings, such [powerful minds] would enable them to achieve enlightenment much quicker.

Since they have the courage and determination to benefit sentient beings, everything that they do are for [sentient beings'] sake. This includes all the merits that they accumulate, which they always dedicate for the happiness of all sentient beings. When they make such prayers from the heart constantly, this will obviously make a difference to them achieving enlightenment quickly.

It is clear that, through the practice of taking on the sufferings of others and giving one's happiness and virtues to sentient beings, one achieves enlightenment much more quickly. Likewise, one also achieves enlightenment much more quickly when one dedicates all of one's roots of virtue from the heart to sentient beings.

Taking the example of *Amitabha's* pure land, *Sukavati*, this is essentially the result of *Amitabha's* bodhicitta which He generated while He was on the path. ***It is also through the dedication of all of His merit that he has accumulated in creating his pure land that, sentient beings can pray and create the causes to be born there.*** The fact that they can be born in His pure land is a result of the dedication prayers made by *Amitabha* Himself when He was on the path before becoming enlightened.

In the *Karma* section of *Lama Tsongkhapa's treatise of the Great Stages of the Path*, it is mentioned that, from Buddha's side, He has created the cause for sentient beings to experience the results of whatever prayers that they have made. From sentient beings' side, they have to create ***some*** of the causes to experience the effect.

Through dedicating one's merit to achieve [enlightenment] for sentient beings and practicing *Tonglen*, [these dedication and practices] do make the achievement of enlightenment much quicker. If that is the case, then there is no need to mention that these would all be of great benefit to sentient beings.

If you think about taking on the suffering of others, as to whether that will actually occur in reality or not, due to the force of the courage and determination of the bodhisattvas' bodhicitta, they really make meant prayers actually wishing to go to the lowest of hells to benefit even just one sentient being. Even though they make all such prayers continually from the heart, but they do not end up there. In fact, in making such prayers due to their strong bodhicitta, this makes them achieve enlightenment much quicker.

Therefore, I think that one would not actually experience the actual taking on of the sufferings of others, even if one does the practice of visualizing taking on their sufferings. Otherwise, one would have difficulties [reconciling experiencing the suffering of others] with the [presentation] of karma and its effects, where it is said that one would not experience the results of an action one did not accumulate. Perhaps this is what has to be given as an answer in general.

Generally, if there is a good motivation of the attitude of benefiting others, one were to show a pleasant demeanor, speak in a polite and nice manner to others, somehow they will appreciate and like [what one is doing]. If a pleasant physical and verbal demeanor can effect a positive experience in another person, then one can also say that, having a positive [mindset], good heart and motivation from one's side can also have a positive effect on another person.

I think [that spreading] one's own positive attitude, mindset, good heart and so forth would definitely be a condition for another person to feel [in such ways] and thus [help] them to transform their minds as well to feel some good-heartedness.

I really wonder [if], dedication of merits means taking one's merit as if it is something tangible and then giving it to someone else, who then receives it. Although it is difficult to really explain in general, but I think that it is for sure, even you can feel and experience it [for yourself, about] the power of positive intentions and prayers. If, with a virtuous intention, a good heart [full of] sincerity, one makes prayers to benefit others, even though how it works is another thing, but one can feel that it does have a [positive] effect on the beneficiary. But I do not think that it works in the sense of one's merits being transferred to another person. I think one can say that, one's sincere virtuous prayers to benefit another person does act as a condition for that person to generate virtuous thoughts.

Even if one's mind cannot fit the idea of taking on the suffering of others, if one merely wishes to practice the giving portion [of *Tonglen*], there is no loss as there is only profit. If one can really dedicate one's merit for the happiness of others from one's heart, having that intention and then doing the visualization, making the aspiration prayers: "Due to my merit, may this and this happens and others benefit, and so forth..." Then there is only benefit and no loss.

One can make prayers, sending one's wishes and dedication, for example, that whatever happiness that one may have now, be it good health, or whatever [desirable situation] one thinks one has, one can also wish it: "May others also experience the same kind of happiness [that I am enjoying right now...]"

[On the other hand,] if one is experiencing a particular problem or suffering, one can also wish from one's heart that: "May others not experience what I am experiencing."

Verse 104:

<p><i>104 Now hear this! Everything is dependently co-arisen. Being dependently co-arisen, they are not independent. Changing this way and that, they are false appearances and illusions; they are images that appear like a whirling firebrand.</i></p>
<p>There is the "I" that is the object of observation of self-grasping and also of self-cherishing, which arises from such a self-grasping, together with other phenomena, all are dependently-arisen.</p>
<p>In Tibetan, <i>Tendrel</i> literally means dependently-related. But [here] it is translated as dependent-arisen. This means that, All phenomena are <i>mere appearances</i>.</p>
<p>This is the power of this word <i>dependently-arisen</i>. Since all phenomena are mere appearances, then this means that, All phenomena are <i>empty of being independently established</i>.</p>
<p>Hence, the word-phrase <i>dependently-arisen</i> has the implication and meaning of <i>emptiness of independent/ self-establishment</i>. This leads to the meaning that, there is not any phenomenon that can exist without depending on something else, everything is therefore dependently-established/ arisen.</p>
<p>Hence, all phenomena are mere appearances, which do not exist as independently-established.</p>
<p>In <i>Lama Tsongkhapa's Three Principle Aspects of the Path</i>, it is stated [in verse 13], <i>The Particular Special Quality of the Prasangika View:</i> <i>Furthermore, appearance eliminates the extreme of existence</i></p>
<p>The word-phrase <i>dependent-arisen</i> means that, there is no independent existence. Hence, whatever that exists, has to exist as dependently-arisen, as mere appearances. Hence, this phrase clears away the extremes of existence in that, it clears away the possibility that things and events can exist from their own side. Hence, it eliminates existence from its own side.</p>
<p>Again, dependently-arisen means that, there is nothing that can exist on its own, independent of other factors, as independently self-established. Hence, the meaning of this phrase is that, [things and events] are empty of independent-establishment. This means that, things exist, but they exist as dependently-arisen, as mere appearances.</p>
<p>If things are mere appearances, then this means that, phenomena do not exist from its own side, in and of themselves.</p>
<p>This is [the meaning of] <i>appearance eliminates the extreme of existence</i>.</p>

<p>This is why the phrase <i>dependent-arising/ dependent-origination</i> is emphasized in <i>Lama Tsongkhapa's</i> presentation of the ultimate nature of reality. Instead of using the word <i>emptiness</i> from the onset, he stresses to approach the topic of emptiness through understanding dependent-arising.</p>
<p>This is because, if one were to start off [trying to] understand emptiness [straight away], most people will make the mistake of thinking that <i>emptiness</i> means non-existence, that nothing [exists]. This is why he emphasized seeking the view through [understanding] dependent-arising.</p>
<p>In the same verse: <i>And emptiness eliminates the extreme of non-existence.</i></p>
<p>The word <i>Emptiness</i> means the empty/ void/ absence of/ lack of self/ independent establishment.</p>
<p>This means that, there is not any phenomenon that can exist independently without depending on other factors. Hence, this implies that, everything that exist is dependently-established, that phenomena do exist.</p>
<p>This is why, a correct understanding of emptiness would <i>eliminate the extreme of non-existence</i>. [One avoids] falling into the extreme wrong view of annihilation, that nothing exists.</p>
<p>This is the meaning of <i>Tendrel, dependent-arising</i>. Of course, there are different levels of meaning behind this word-phrase.</p>
<p>There are coarser and subtler levels of meaning: the coarse meaning of dependent-origination is found in the explanation of the Hinayana tenets of the <i>Great Exposition and Sutra Schools</i>, which explain it in terms of <i>dependence on cause</i>.</p>
<p>When one examines the presentation of the Mahayana tenets, then the meaning of dependent-origination becomes more subtle and profound. There is the explanation of dependent-arising in terms of the <i>dependency on parts</i>.</p>
<p>This is the concept of the whole being dependent on its parts, which come together to form the whole, and so forth.</p>
<p>However, the most profound explanation of dependent-arising is found in the Consequence Middle Way School.</p>
<p>They assert that, things exist in mere name, as dependently-designated. In dependence on the basis of designation, things are dependently-designated.</p>
<p>This is the meaning of dependent-arising/ dependent-origination, which means that, there is no self-institution. The meaning of dependent-arising cannot accommodate the meaning of self-institution. Things cannot stand nor be established on its own.</p>
<p>Hence, the most subtle meaning of dependent-origination means that there is nothing that can exist in and of itself, no self-establishment. Things are not self-instituted. This applies to everything that exists, including the 'self, I, person'.</p>
<p>However, if one examines one's own experience, how does one think of the way one exists? One has the appearance and the belief that one's 'self, I, person' is able to stand on its own, created in and of itself, something there in dependent of other things, a self-instituted 'I'.</p>
<p>While there is no such phenomenon in reality, but one has such experiences, the appearance and believe that one's 'I' is self-instituted, able to exist in and of itself. Therefore, one needs to examine whether one does exist in such ways or not.</p>
<p>For example, one considers oneself a human. This is essentially related to the human body that one possesses. On the basis of such a body, which makes up the flesh, skin, blood and so forth, one designates 'human'.</p>
<p>But if one were to look for the 'human being' in the body, it is obvious that it is not the blood, flesh, bones, skin and so forth.</p>
<p>In one's current lifetime, one is a human being, but such an identity as a human being, such a specific 'self, I, person' is only limited to this current lifetime. This is because, it exists in relation to the human body that one possesses.</p>
<p>When this current lifetime comes to an end, such a specific identity of a 'self, I, person' ceases to exist.</p>
<p><i>Khenrinpoche:</i> Does that part of you that is a human go to the next life? One needs to differentiate between the specific identity of a particular lifetime with the 'self, I, person' that pervades in all lifetimes, which exists from beginningless lifetimes. Hence, there is an 'I' that goes to hell and an 'I' that goes to enlightenment.</p>
<p>The specific personal identity that is related to a specific lifetime, such as oneself being a human in this life, will cease to exist when that lifetime comes to an end.</p>
<p>For example, one is now sitting here listening to the teachings. There is an 'I that is listening to the Dharma'. But such an 'I' [that is listening to the Dharma] will cease to exist later, when one is no longer listening to the Dharma at the end of the class.</p>
<p>The point is that, the 'self, I, person' and everything else, none of these are established from its own side.</p>
<p>When one looks for one's 'I' of this life, the human being of this life, when one looks for the 'self, I, person' in the body, one will not be able to find it, as the blood, flesh, bone nor skin and so forth, nothing is the 'I'.</p>
<p>This is rather interesting in that, when one looks for the 'I' in the basis of designation, one's body and mind, one would not be able to find the 'I' there. One cannot find any of [these bases] which is the 'I'.</p>
<p>Yet, one would also not be able to find an 'I' that exists outside the body and mind, which is of a different entity from them.</p>

Although one would not be able to find the 'self, I, person' within one's body and mind, one would also not be able to find it outside one's body and mind.
Yet, one cannot say that one's 'I' does not exist, as this would go against common knowledge or worldly convention.
Hence, the 'I' does exist. Yet, it is not the body nor mind, neither is it different from the body and mind.
Although one cannot find the 'I' within the basis of designation, neither is there an 'I' that is separate from the body and mind. Yet, one knows and experiences it, that there is obviously a 'self, I, person'. Hence, the person definitely exists.
Therefore, in conclusion, from the Consequence Middle Way School's presentation, the 'self, I, person' does not exist from its own side, but it nevertheless does exist, as something: <i>Dependently-designated in mere name in dependence upon its basis of designation.</i>
If one really thinks about it, this is about the only answer that one can [derive from]. No matter how one examines it, one's answer will not transcend this [conclusion]. Yet, this is the most difficult point to understand and realize.
This is the most difficult to understand uncommon position of the Consequence Middle Way School, that nothing exists from the side of the basis of designation. When one looks within the basis of designation, one would not be able to find the imputed object, neither would one be able to find the object outside the basis of designation.
Yet, the [object] exists. [Hence, the only way that it can exist would be to] exist as dependently-designated in mere name in relation to the base/ basis of designation.
That is why all the lower schools of Buddhist tenets, from the Autonomy Middle Way School and below, assert that there is definitely something that one can point to that is the 'I'.
[They all assert that,] anything that exists, including the 'I', must exist by way of their own character, having something from its own side. Hence, they are essentially saying that, if one looks for the imputed object, one will be able to find it amongst the basis of designation, as there is something there that is the object.
Through reasoning, the Consequence Middle Way School shows how [such assertions] cannot [stand].
When one hears the word <i>selflessness</i> , one needs to understand what is it that does not exist. Selflessness [indicates] the lack of a self. This means that, the mind that apprehends a self, that which is apprehended by the apprehension of a self, such a 'self' do not exist.
One has an apprehension of a self, a self-grasping. The object of such a mind is the 'self'. Hence, selflessness means that, the 'self' that is apprehended by the self-grasping [mind] does not exist.
For example, there is an apprehension of a self of person. Such a mind is grasping at an inherently existing person. Such an 'inherently existing person' that is being grasped at by such a self-grasping [mind], does not exist.
One uses the terms 'self, I, person'. Such a 'self, I, person' does exist. Hence, it is important to understand that, oneself does exist. One should therefore not confuse [such an existent 'self, I, person'] with what one thinks is the meaning of selflessness.
Usually, when people hear the word 'selflessness', they think that the 'self, I, person' does not exist. This is not what it means.
Selflessness does not mean that the 'self, I, person' does not exist. The 'self, I, person' obviously does exist.
The 'self' in 'selflessness' refers to the 'I' or 'person' that is grasped at by ignorance, which is the apprehension of the self. Such a self-grasping is grasping at/ holding onto something. That which is held on/ grasped at by ignorance is the 'self' in the word 'selflessness'. Such a 'self' does not exist. Hence, selflessness does not mean in general that, there is no 'self, I, person'.
Yet, the object of observation of self-grasping does exist. One also has to be clear on this as well.
The object of observation/ focal object of ignorance, the apprehension of a self, is the 'self, I, person' that exists conventionally. Ignorance focuses and observes such a conventionally existent 'self, I, person', but [ends up] apprehending it to be inherently existent/ existing from its own side, while the 'I' does not exist in such a way.

In general, the difference between the self-cherishing possessed by those who realize emptiness and those who do not:

One also needs to examine the relationship between self-cherishing and self-grasping. Self-grasping focuses on its object of observation, the 'self, I, person' that exists, but apprehends it to be inherently existent from its own side.
When one realizes emptiness directly, in the perspective of such a consciousness, there is no [conception] of an inherently existent 'I'. This mind realizes that there is no inherently existent 'I', it realizes the emptiness of the inherently existent 'I'.
When this person realizes emptiness/ selflessness directly, he realizes the emptiness of the inherently existent 'I'. Such a realization would also induce an understanding that the 'I' does exist conventionally.
Those who have achieved liberation from cyclic existence, who have become arhats, have eliminated their self-grasping. However, they still [possess] self-cherishing.

Since arhats have no self-grasping, hence, they do not possess the self-cherishing which is apprehending the inherently existent self as the basis and which holds such a self to be the most important object.
Nevertheless, they still possess self-cherishing. They are focusing on the conventionally existent 'I', that which exists, and considers such a conventionally existent 'I' to be the most important object, more important than everybody else.
If one examines it in such a way, one would then have an idea, how arhats still possess self-cherishing.
Since there is nothing that exist that is self-instituted, hence, phenomena do undergo change, as is stated in this verse 104: <i>Changing this way and that</i> . For example, the haze [in Singapore] appears to one as if it will never go away, as it has been here for such a long time. But due to the change in the wind directions, the haze can go away. One then sees a clear sky.
Again, the clear sky appears as if there is something there from its own side, as always being that way
Hence, whatever appears will appear as if it will always be like that, something right there from its own side.
Whether it is pollution of the sky or it is clear weather, all these occur because of the sky. It is due to the sky that makes it possible [for all such occurrences to appear] as it is the basis. What is obscured is the sky, what is clear is also the sky itself.
Hence, what makes [such occurrences] possible is actually the sky itself, as the sky is by nature clear and vacuous.
This is the analogy. Likewise, since phenomena do not exist inherently in and of themselves, being empty of existing inherently, therefore, change is possible.
<i>Since phenomena are dependent-arising, they are empty of existing inherently. Since phenomena do not exist inherently, therefore, there is the entire variety of phenomena/ appearances.</i>
Hence Verse 104 says: <i>Changing this way and that, they are false appearances and illusions.</i>

Verses 104 & 105:

<i>104: They are images that appear like a whirling firebrand. 105 Like the plantain tree, life has no inner core. Like a bubble, a lifetime has no inner core. Like a mist, it dissipates upon close examination. Like a mirage, it is beautiful from afar. Like a reflection in a mirror, it seems as if it were really true. Like clouds and fog, it seems as if it were really stable.</i>
<i>Whirling firebrand:</i> If one takes a stick, sets it on fire and twirls it quickly, there will be sparkles, which make it looks as if there is a whirling firebrand, a wheel on fire that is turning. Although in reality there is no turning fire-wheel over there, but there is an appearance of it. Likewise, although phenomena do not exist from its own side, but it appears to be truly existent.
Although there is not a burning wheel, but there is an appearance of it. Likewise, although phenomena do not exist truly, but they appear to exist truly. Hence, phenomena do exist, but as mere appearances.
<i>Plantain tree:</i> Such a tree looks very sturdy on the outside, as if it has a very solid core and can last forever. But if it were cut, one finds that it is actually rather hollow inside. Likewise, although one's life-force appears as very stable, as if one will live for a very long time, but this is not so. With the gathering of some conditions, one would be dead.
<i>Bubble:</i> One's life-force is also similar to a bubble in that, it looks very nice and can stay that way for a very long time. But [one knows that] actually it is not.
These analogies serve to illustrate the fact that, there is nothing really concrete about one's existence. Nothing has concrete existence, which includes the 'self, I, person'. Although it appears to be truly existent, one also believes it that way, in reality, that is not the case.
<i>Clouds and fog:</i> When one observes such phenomena, these look as if it were really there. But when enters into the fog or the mist, one does not see the mist and so forth. Likewise, if one examines how the 'self, I, person' appears [back] to one, at the level of mere appearances, without investigating and analyzing what it is, there is the appearance of something real there.
But when one [investigates and analyzes] in detail [the nature of] this 'I' to see where it is, what one believed to be so solid earlier on, dissipates [upon such checking]. One loses the sense of concrete identity, as the 'I' cannot be found.
<i>Mirage:</i> Under certain weather conditions, like under extreme heat, while there is not any water over there, but there can be an appearance of a body of water right there.
Likewise, all phenomena, which arise from causes and conditions, of which there are many to which one ascribes the term beautiful or attractive, even though there are such pleasant, beautiful and attractive objects, but these are not inherently beautiful from their own sides. Rather, their existence as beautiful objects is only dependent on causes and conditions.
Like a mirage, which does not exist in the way it appears, likewise, although there are phenomena that appears to one as beautiful, but these are mere appearances in that, there is no real inherently existing beauty.

Verses 106 & 107:

<p>106 This butcher, the enemy Ego, is just the same. It seems as if it really exists, but it has never really existed. It seems as if it is really true, but it has never been really true anywhere. It seems as if it is vividly appearing, but it is beyond the realm of affirmation or denial.</p>
<p>107 And as for the wheel of actions, it is just the same: though it lacks an inherent nature, yet it appears, like the reflection of the moon in water. Actions and their consequences are a variegated multitude of [falsities]. Even though they are just appearances, I urge you to embrace virtue and avoid [negativities].</p>
<p>This butcher, the enemy Ego, is just the same. It seems as if it really exists, but it has never really existed: If one stands in front of a mirror, one will be reflected on its surface. One looks as if one exists right in the mirror, but [what one sees on the mirror] is just [one's] reflection in the mirror, one is not in the mirror.</p>
<p>If one were to ascend a mountain, reach a certain height above the clouds and look down, it would seem as if the whole sky [below] is covered with clouds. It appears as if the clouds were there forever and will be there forever.</p>
<p>Although it looks as if the clouds will remain there forever without changing, but in reality, change is happening in each and every single moment as there is air pressure, movement of the wind and so forth. Hence, change is occurring [at all times].</p>
<p>Essentially, all composite phenomena undergo momentary changes. Although they appear as if they are unchanging, stable and always there, but in fact, composite phenomena undergo momentary change [all the time].</p>
<p>The point is that, self-cherishing and self-grasping do not exist truly as well, but “exist” due to the mistake in the mind.</p>
<p>By depending on these analogies, one understands that phenomena, including one's self-cherishing and self-grasping, are all mere appearances which do not exist in and of themselves.</p>
<p>It seems as if it is really true, but it has never been really true anywhere. It seems as if it is vividly appearing, but it is beyond the realm of affirmation or denial. And as for the wheel of actions, it is just the same:</p>
<p>Every phenomena that exist, when they appear and are brought to the attention of one's mind, appear as truly existent although in reality they do not exist inherently. Regardless of the place and time, inherent existence has never come into existence. Nevertheless, anything that exists, when they appear to one's mind, appear to have that concrete existence.</p>
<p>Whether it is one's self-cherishing or self-grasping, together with the 'self, I, person' that is observed by the self-grasping, when one brings all such objects to the attention of one's mind, they all appear as truly existent, one also believe that they are truly existent. Their appearance to one as inherently existent does not mean that they are inherently existent.</p>
<p>The appearance of phenomena as inherently existent to one's mind is not from the side of the object, rather, it is due to the mistaken projection coming from one's mind.</p>
<p>[All phenomena are] beyond the realm of affirmation or denial: The phenomenon that is being designated and that which designates it all do not exist truly.</p>
<p>One's self-grasping together with the self-cherishing induced by this self-grasping, the karma accumulated that has been motivated by these [minds], as well as the results of all such karma, sufferings, have never existed inherently. They do not exist in and of themselves, but are all mere appearances of the mind.</p>
<p>Verses 103 up to here explained with many examples and lines of reasoning to essentially delineate the view of emptiness. There are different analogies that one can think of to understand how things do not exist truly.</p>
<p>Take for example, one's dream experiences. When one is dreaming, one does see and experience many different kinds of objects. Nevertheless, all such objects are mere appearances to the dream consciousness.</p>
<p>Likewise, when one sees the illusions created by an illusionist who conjures an apparition of an elephant, if one is unaware that it is merely an apparition, then when one sees the illusion, one thinks that there is actually a real elephant there. In reality, there is not a functional elephant there but merely an illusion that looks exactly like an elephant but is not.</p>
<p>This is because, when one looks for the elephant, there is not a functioning elephant right there, but merely an appearance to the mind that has been affected by the illusion.</p>
<p>In a dream, one may dream of many kinds of objects, for example, an appearance of a real horse or elephant right there. But these are not real horse or elephant as they [do not function nor] qualify as a horse or elephant.</p>
<p>But nevertheless, there is still the appearance, which is just that: an appearance to the dreaming consciousness.</p>
<p>Likewise, the illusions that one sees that has been created by an illusionist appears as an elephant or a horse, all these are not real horses and elephants as they are not functional elephants or horses. They are just mere appearances to the mind that has been affected by the illusion.</p>
<p>Khenrinpoche: You must understand the examples. Otherwise [you will not understand the] meaning to be explained later.</p>

If you see an elephant in a dream, such a <i>dream elephant</i> is an appearance to the dreaming consciousness.
Essentially, a <i>dream elephant</i> is just merely an appearance to the dreaming consciousness [apprehending it].
Likewise, all that exists, oneself and others, samsara and nirvana, all phenomena are mere appearances that exist in mere name. Everything that exists is merely designated/ imputed by thought in dependence upon the basis of designation.
Whatever phenomenon there is, it does not exist from the side of the basis of designation. It does not exist in or on the basis of designation, there is nothing from the side of the basis of designation that is the phenomenon.
What the teachings say is that, everything that exists, all phenomena have never existed and do not exist from the side of the basis of designation. There is nothing from the side of the basis of designation that is the object.
Rather, phenomena exist as mere appearances, something that is merely posited by thought, which then exist in mere name.
For any particular phenomenon that one chooses to investigate, the reason that it does not exist from the side of the base/ basis of designation, that there is nothing from the basis of designation, in it nor on that is the object, is that, if phenomenon exists from its own side within the basis of designation, then when one looks for it, one would be able to find it.
If something is really there, then when one looks for it, one would be able to find it. But when one investigates closely and analyzes, one would not be able to find it.
Since it cannot be found, this is why it is said that, phenomena do not exist from the side of the basis of designation.
This is the deepest and ultimate nature of all phenomena. This is actually how it has been and will always be, where one can say that it is the mode of abiding of phenomena.
This is the real nature of phenomena in that, the phenomenon does not exist from the side of its basis of designation, for if it exists, it can be found. But since it cannot be found, therefore, it does not exist from its own side.
Since this is the ultimate, real nature of phenomena, one would then question the reason why the reality of the ultimate nature of phenomena does not appear as they are to one's mind and one does not realize it as it is.
Essentially, the reason one sees things as truly existent is that, there is a mistake coming from one's own side, due to being contaminated/ affected/ polluted by the stains of the predispositions of ignorance.
Just like how one sees the myriad abnormal objects which are untrue in a dream consciousness, likewise, due to the fault/ mistake of ignorance in one's mind, which pollutes and contaminates one's mind to the extend that, anything and everything that appears to one, would appear as truly existent, while they are not.
Hence essentially, the mistake comes from one's own side, from one's own mind. This is because, one's mind is polluted by the predisposition/ latencies of ignorance. Hence, all the mistaken appearances of true existence are the makings of this predisposition of ignorance.
Therefore, to the mind that is polluted by the predisposition of ignorance, there is the factor of the appearance of true existence. Whether one calls it the object of negation or not, <i>it is</i> the object of negation, the target which does not exist is what one needs to realize.
All these examples shown serve to help one understand how phenomena are not truly existent.

Even though phenomena lacked true existence, cause and effects are in fact feasible:

If all phenomena are not truly existent, then how is the presentation of cause and effect feasible?
<i>107 And as for the wheel of actions, it is just the same: though it lacks an inherent nature, yet it appears, like the reflection of the moon in water. Actions and their consequences are a variegated multitude of [falsities]. Even though they are just appearances, I urge you to embrace virtue and avoid [negativities].</i>
The Consequence Middle Way School states that, although all phenomena are not truly existent, nevertheless, the presentation of cause and effect is feasible conventionally. As in convention, there exist agent, action and object.
For example, if there is the coming together of a body of water and moonlight, there is the appearance of a moon on the surface of this body of water. As long as there is the gathering of shining moonlight and the body of water, there will be an appearance of the reflection of the moon on the surface of this body of water.
This is something that is unstoppable. One cannot stop the reflection of the moon from appearing.
Likewise, when one engages in virtue, one will experience happiness; when one engages in nonvirtue, one will experience suffering. [Such appearances] will arise. Although nothing exist truly, everything that exist is empty of existing inherently, nevertheless, it is impossible for suffering to arise from virtue and happiness to arise from nonvirtue.

Verse 108:

108 When in a dream a peat fire blazes, we are terrified by the heat, although it is without substance. In the same way, although the hell realms and such are without [inherent existence], we fear the smelter's fire and other tortures. As that is so, we should forsake [nonvirtue].

It is possible to dream of being caught in the midst of a fire: One may be up in the mountain and suddenly everything is on fire. When one sees [such appearances], although it is only a dream, one may become afraid, experience fear, sweat and cry.

If one is sleeping next to another person, when one screams in the dream, that person will know that one is [having a nightmare] even though this person does not see any fire.

Although it is just a dream fire, as there is not a real functional fire there, nevertheless, one experiences mental fear and physical suffering in the dream. Although there is not a real functional fire there, but suffering still arises.

Likewise, the [functional] hell fires, hell guardians and terrifying weapons that hell beings see, all exist, but they do not exist inherently. [Even though these do not exist inherently], nevertheless, they bring about great fear, pain and suffering.

All these are mere appearances, but these are mere appearances which are the projection of a nonvirtuous mind.

The point is not to misunderstand mere appearances to mean non-functional, not to [undervalue and disregard] mere appearances. It does not mean that mere appearances do not function, as it will still give rise to results.

Hence, the point is not to disregard karma and its effects. Even though everything that exists, exists as mere appearances, but they do function: virtue leads to happiness and nonvirtue leads to suffering.

Verse 109:

109 In a feverish delirium we may feel as if we are wandering around suffocating in a deep cave, even though there is no darkness at all. In the same way, even though ignorance and the like [do not exist inherently], we should get rid of our [afflictions] through the three wisdoms.

Sometimes, when people have a heat disorder in the body, for example, due to high fever, they may have the appearance of the environment as being enveloped in darkness, seeing dark clouds or fog. Although in reality it is not the case, but due to the heat disorder, they may have such appearances.

Likewise, due to ignorance, everything that appears to one, appears as truly existent, while these are not. Although all that exist are mere appearances, nevertheless mere appearances function conventionally that give rise to its respective results.

To understand how all phenomena are mere appearances, one has to cultivate the three types of wisdom. These are the wisdoms arisen from hearing, reflection and meditation:

Firstly, one has to pursue extensive hearing, learning and studying on selflessness/ emptiness. When one develops some idea on emptiness/ selflessness, this is the wisdom arisen from hearing.

Secondly, whatever one has heard, studied, those information collected, one has to reflect and analyze them repeatedly until one develops a definite ascertainment and certitude in one's own heart about this subject of selflessness/ emptiness. This is the wisdom arisen from reflection. The best type of wisdom arisen from reflection is an inferential cognition on emptiness.

Thirdly, by familiarizing repeatedly on the certitude or ascertainment with regards to the meaning of emptiness, one comes to develop the wisdom arisen from meditation. Of the different types of wisdom arisen from meditation with respect to emptiness, the best form is the direct realization of emptiness.

With [such a realization], one has the tool to uproot ignorance as well as the predispositions/ latencies of ignorance.

Verse 110:

110 When a musician plays a melody on a lute, the sound lacks inherent nature, if we analyze it. But when the sweet sounds emerge, their unanalyzed aggregate eases the anguish in people's hearts.

When someone plays a guitar well, it is pleasant to one's ears, one [experiences pleasure]. When analyzing the source of this pleasant sound, [one does not find that] it comes from the body of the guitar alone, the strings alone nor the person playing it.

The sound does not come from any of these factors alone. Rather, such a pleasant sound arises from the aggregation/ gathering of all such factors/ parts.

When someone plays the guitar well, then it sounds very beautiful and nice. But if one goes beyond the appearance of the sound to investigate and seek out where exactly it is coming from, one would not be able to find it in the player, guitar or any parts of it. Hence, if one looks for it, it cannot be found on any of such parts that make up the composite aggregate.

If one is satisfied with the mere appearance of the pleasant sound without investigating and analyzing it, it does exist and function to bring comfort to some people.

Verse 111:

111 When we analyze all causes and effects, they lack inherent nature as either identical or different. Yet phenomena vividly appear to arise and perish, and we experience pleasure and suffering as if they really existed. Even though they are just appearances, I urge you to [adopt] virtue and [abandon negativities].

When one investigates and analyzes all causes and effects, one will not be able to find a truly existent cause and effect, point to a cause and effect that exist in and of itself.

If one does not investigate and analyze but leaves it at the level of appearances, [such appearances do] exist and function.

The point is that, at the level of mere appearances, cause and effect are feasible.

Verses 112 to 114:

112 When drops of water fill a jar, the first drop does not fill it, nor the last, nor each drop individually. Yet the dependently arisen aggregate fills the jar.

This verse is an analogy to show the meaning stated in Verse 113:

113 Similarly, when someone experiences their [results] of pleasure or pain, it is due neither to the first moment of the cause, nor to the last moment, and so on. Yet the dependently arisen aggregate makes us experience pleasure or pain. Even though they are [mere] appearances, I urge you to [adopt] virtue and [abandon negativities].

114 Aha! The appearance that delights our mind, though independent when unanalyzed, definitely lacks an inner core. However, the fact that phenomena appear as if they exist is profound and difficult for the [lowly ones] to understand.

Aha (Tib: Emaho): This is a positive proclamation of amazement/ wonderment. The author proclaims: "How wonderful it is to realize there is no contradiction between appearance and emptiness, in fact, they are mutually complimentary."

[One should] correctly understand that, appearance and emptiness are not contradictory, rather, they are mutually complimentary. This is the understanding that [one] needs to arrive at:

*Because things are empty of existing truly, therefore, they are mere appearances.
Because things are mere appearances, therefore, they are empty of existing truly.*

In reality, the meaning is [precisely this], that [these two] are mutually complimentary. However, it is difficult for most people to understand. This is because, when one thinks of emptiness, one does not know how to posit existence/ phenomena/ mere appearances. When one thinks how these exist, one loses the [understanding] that these are empty of existing truly.

Hence, it is very difficult for most people to bring the two together.

If one relates to phenomena [merely] at the level of appearances, if one is merely satisfied with such mere appearances without investigating and analyzing, then there is the whole variety of appearances, as things exist conventionally. One is therefore able to posit a whole multitude/ variety of phenomena without problem.

However, if one is not satisfied with the mere appearances but goes deeper beyond them, when one [attempts] to look for the final nature of these phenomena, then one will not be able to find anything that is truly existent. Yet, things exist.

That is why it is said that, *one has to be satisfied at the level of mere appearances* [to understand how things exist conventionally]. When one leaves [the investigation and analysis] at this level, things do function. But if one is not satisfied but goes deeper, then one will not be able to point to anything that is the phenomenon in question.

One has to understand that, whatever conventional phenomena that appear/ are brought to the attention of one's mind, these would necessarily appear as truly existent. Although they are not truly existent, but they would appear as truly existent.

This is because, one's mind is polluted by the predisposition of ignorance. As long as [such predispositions are] still in the mind, all phenomena will continue to appear as truly existent.

It is extremely difficult to see that appearance and emptiness as mutually complimentary instead of [not] being contradictory, how these [two] are mutually supportive.

It is very difficult to posit that things exist conventionally to function at the level of appearances and to be satisfied with it.

Hence, it is very difficult to have these two realizations and understanding.

With the exception of those who understood the [assertions of the] Consequence Middle Way School, everybody else, **the lowly ones**, would not be able to understand this.

Perhaps one can take **the lowly ones** to mean those who follow the Autonomy Middle Way School and below.

Verse 115:

<p>115 Now, when you are absorbed in meditative equipoise on this, what is there really to a mere appearance? How can either existence or non-existence exist? How can anyone anywhere assert “it is” or “it is not”?</p>
<p>What is there really to a mere appearance? In the experience/ perspective of a person who has the realization of emptiness, while in meditative equipoise focusing on emptiness, such a person has no appearance of conventional phenomena at all.</p>
<p>The point is, in the experience/ perspective/ meditative equipoise of such a person who is realizing emptiness, there is no appearance of conventional phenomena whatsoever, nothing whatsoever.</p>
<p>[For this perspective,] while there is no conventional phenomena, this does not mean that there is nothing that is appearing to such a meditative equipoise.</p>
<p>How can existence exist? Existence here refers to conventional appearances, which do not exist in the perspective of the meditative equipoise realizing emptiness.</p>
<p>How can non-existence exist? Although conventional appearance do not exist in the perspective of the meditative equipoise realizing emptiness, but it is not that there is nothing appearing to it, as emptiness is appearing to it.</p>
<p>Hence, it is not non-existence, that nothing is appearing.</p>

Verse 116:

<p>116 Subject and object lack ultimate reality. If your mind remains in its innate nature, uncontrived and shining, [ultimately] free from [that which is to be adopted, discarded and all elaborations], you will become a great being.</p>
<p>Just as phenomena/ objects do not exist truly, the emptiness itself does not exist truly as well. Hence, nothing exists ultimately, as nothing is ultimately established, including the objects to be adopted and discarded.</p>
<p>Hence, in the perspective of the meditative equipoise focusing on emptiness, there is an absence, freedom of all elaborations of conventional appearances/ conventionality.</p>
<p>Without any distractions, one enters into meditative equipoise focusing on emptiness, through [repeatedly] familiarizing oneself with such a realization for a long period of time, eventually, emptiness will be directly perceived.</p>
<p>At that time, one will become a great being, an arya/ superior.</p>

Verse 117:

<p>117 Thus, by practicing the conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, and thereby uninterruptedly carrying the two accumulations through to completion, may I perfectly realize the two aims.</p>
<p>1) As mentioned before, one firstly has to think very deeply about the faults and disadvantages of one's self-cherishing attitude from myriad angles/ perspectives to arrive at such an understanding.</p>
<p>2) One also has to think very deeply from myriad angles to realize the advantages and benefits of cherishing others.</p>
<p>3) Based on these two understandings/ realizations, one [can start] to train the mind to develop bodhicitta through the system of Exchanging Self and Other.</p>
<p>4) Through that, one will come to develop the mind of enlightenment/ conventional bodhicitta.</p>
<p>5) With this conventional bodhicitta, one can accumulate and complete accumulating the collection of merit.</p>
<p>6) Through using analogies and reasoning, one comes to realize emptiness through hearing, reflection and meditation.</p>
<p>7) Through that, one develops the wisdom realizing emptiness.</p>
<p>8) Eventually, one will realize emptiness directly, this is when ultimate bodhicitta is generated in one's heart.</p>
<p>9) With that, one accumulates the collection of wisdom.</p>
<p>10) Hence, through a combination/ union of the practices of method (conventional bodhicitta] and wisdom (ultimate bodhicitta), one accumulates and completes the accumulation of the two collections.</p>
<p>11) With that, one achieves the two bodies, the Truth Body and Form Body.</p>
<p>12) Through that, one accomplishes the aims of oneself and others.</p>

Essential advice on what is the correct practice:

Khenrinpoche: Like what is said in the *Heart Sutra*, now you have achieved the perfect and complete full enlightenment!

Lama Atisha had relied on many gurus and received tantric empowerments from many of them.

Among all of his gurus, there were a few that he considered to be the most precious and most kind.

One of whom is [the author of this text] *Dharmaraksita*. Lama Atisha considered him to be the most kind and precious teacher. This is due to having received [from him the] teachings and instructions on cultivating and developing the two types of bodhicitta, conventional and ultimate bodhicitta.

This is because, even though one needs different kinds of teachings and instructions to achieve enlightenment, but the very heart, core and essence of [these instructions] are the [instructions to develop] these two bodhicittas. Without cultivating and developing conventional and ultimate bodhicittas, there is no enlightenment whatsoever.

All of us have been tortured and tormented by our afflictions since beginningless lifetimes up to now, if one really settles down to analyze and think well, that which will eventually enable one to overcome and defeat one's afflictions are these two bodhicittas, conventional and ultimate bodhicittas.

Hence, what one should be focusing on in one's practice is to ***learn*** about these two bodhicittas, then as much as possible, cultivate, develop and experience them. If one is able to do so, then one would have peace in one's heart and experience happiness. One will also be able to hurt and destroy one's ego, afflictions and ignorance. This is really the focus.

What one needs is to gain mastery and wrest back control over one's mind. Since beginningless lifetimes up till now, one has [failed to] gain control over one's mind. Rather, one's afflictions have gained [dominance]. To gain control and mastery over one's mind, one needs to cultivate and develop these two bodhicittas.

Very often, many people ask: "What is the main practice for me?" The answer is what is has just been mentioned. This is the heart essence, [learning about and practicing] the two bodhicittas. There is nothing more than that. One is always given advice to have a good heart and be a good person. Even though one has to have a good heart, but there are ***many different levels*** of good heart as well. The ultimate level of good heart is bodhicitta. [Among one's many aims,] that should be one of the primary focus, to ***1)*** aim for bodhicitta, ***2)*** learn, ***3)*** train and then ***4)*** move closer towards that.

This is because, once one has the good heart, particularly once one has the ultimate good heart of bodhicitta, then it does not matter where one is born. There is only happiness for the person who has it, whether he is in the pure lands or in the hells. He is happy anywhere due to his bodhicitta.

Very often, many people would think that the main practice is tantric deity yoga, meditating on some deity. While deity yoga is really good, but for the practice of deity yoga to be correct, one must have bodhicitta first.

Without the practice and experience of bodhicitta, there is no way for any deity practice to become correct or real practice.

Without bodhicitta, there is really no tantric practice. Bodhicitta here refers to the two types of bodhicitta, the [conventional] bodhicitta and the understanding, experience and realization of emptiness [conjoined with the conventional bodhicitta].

Without these two types of bodhicitta, it is not possible at all to actually do tantric practice.

If tantric practice is done on the basis of having the experiences of the two types of bodhicitta, then that tantric practice itself becomes beneficial in that, it will contribute and act as an antidote to one's self-cherishing and self-grasping.

If one does tantric practices without any experiences of bodhicitta and meditation on emptiness, instead of this tantric practice decreasing one's afflictions of self-cherishing and self-grasping, there is in fact the possibility and danger of it increasing and strengthening one's ego and self-cherishing.

Hence, one's focus is really to ***learn and think about*** these two bodhicittas, as much as possible try to integrate them into one's life and practice them. If one practices it that way, then one's life will become meaningful.