

Chapter Four. Knowing through Reasoning - Inference

The Mind being Used to Infer

H2: The Principle of Establishment by Proof through Inference

I1: The Elements of Inference

J1: The Mind being Used to Infer

[VERSE 29]
Perceiving objects' general characteristics,

And associating them with names so as to know the real objects,

This is conceptual mind,

With which one can perfectly utilize various names and expressions.

When we apprehend an object, we do so by associating the object's general characteristics with its own characteristics. For example, when we apprehend a pillar, we discern it by associating the mental image of the pillar in our mind, that is, the pillar's general characteristics, with the particular pillar outside that has its own characteristics. Here, the verses explain that we first grasp the general characteristics of an object with our mind, and then we associate the name of this object such as "pillar" together with what the name expresses. Thus, we are able to know objects such as a pillar. This is how the conceptual mind works, it associates names and objects and identify them. Through this type of conceptual mind we can perfectly apply names and expressions in refuting or establishing things that actually exist.

The application of names and expressions goes along with "mind", "name", and "utilization". For example, I have the mental image of a pillar in terms of its general characteristics: "Oh! This is a pillar." This is what we call "mind", that is, a conceptual

mind. As the mental image of the pillar emerges from within my mind, I call it “pillar”, which is “name”. Once I have “mind” and “name”, I can then use them in practical activities, and this is called “utilization”. For example, a pillar has the function of supporting the roof beam, and we can “utilize” its function.

Relying on the conceptual mind that associates an object’s general characteristics with its own characteristics, people are able to analyze this object and determine its usage. This is a common way of refuting or establishing things, which is quite reasonable for worldly people. This part is very well explained in *The Treasure of Logic on Valid Cognition*.

[VERSE 30]

***To those who are not familiar with names and expressions,
The objects’ general characteristics can still appear to their minds.
Depending on a mind that is capable of associating them with names,
They thus adopt or abandon such objects.***

In our world, some sentient beings, such as babies and animals, are simply unfamiliar with names and expressions. Still, they possess a conceptual mind that is able to associate objects’ own characteristics with general characteristics. For example, new babies might not know the name of “fire”, yet once they know that fire burns, they are afraid of getting close to fire. When we bring them food, they might not know this is called “cookie” and that is called “milk”, yet once they know that cookies and milk are edible things, they will gladly accept them.

Likewise, a yak does not know the name of “water”, and yet, when thirsty, it will look for water to drink. Moreover, yaks will step back from dangerous places like mountain cliffs. Or when running into a car, a yak will never say, “A car has come my way, let’s run, now!” It is unable to explain the meaning of the term “car”. Yet it knows that this thing might bring harm and therefore will avoid the car.

Hence, a conceptual mind that associates an object’s own characteristics with its

general characteristics exists in the mental continuum of all sentient beings. Some sentient beings have no knowledge of an object's name, but their conceptual mind has the ability of associating a name with an object's general characteristics in the future. Relying on the conceptual mind, they pursue what they want, like a baby seeking milk, and avoid what they don't want, like a yak avoiding dangerous objects.

[VERSE 31]

Without a conceptual mind,

There could be no conventions for refutation or establishment.

Therefore, inference and principles,

Could not be demonstrated to anyone.

The conceptual mind is indispensable. Without it, "establishment", which includes inferring the existence of something in the world and proving what something is, would be impossible. "Negation", which is distinguished into affirming negation and non-affirming negation, would also be impossible. As a result, the inferential reasoning of Buddhist Logic, as well as the principles of grammar, medicine, and monastic precepts, would also be impossible to be established and be explained to others.

For example, when we study monastic precepts, and hear stories that explain the performance of unwholesome actions, we might begin to tremble with fear, and so we might think, "In the future, I must not perform unwholesome actions." When confronted with stories about performing wholesome actions, we might think: "This wholesome action brings about much merit, so I must certainly perform it." Indeed, these are all inferences achieved by means of a conceptual mind. Therefore, if the conceptual mind were utterly nonexistent, the entire world would fall into a pointless and confusing condition, for no principle could be established, no inference could be accomplished, and no hidden thing could be deduced.

The realm of the ultimate is beyond all conceptual thinking. But at the beginning we cannot completely do away with conceptual thinking, for we require it in order to

understand those things that are hidden to us. Direct perception grasps its object of the current moment. The images and singularities of a perceived object appear in the exact way as they are, in a non-conceptual manner. While some things may be apprehended through direct perception, still other things must rely on inference.

Regarding the supramundane aspect, various teachings as well as practices in accordance with the principle of causality, must depend on conceptual thinking. This is also true regarding the mundane aspect. For example, contemporary scientists engage in much reflection and research about future events such as earthquakes or other disasters. It would be impossible to carry out such research without conceptual thinking. Therefore, the conceptual mind is quite important regarding both the mundane and supramundane aspect.

[VERSE 32]

Conceptual mind can evaluate, determine, and look for,

Non-evident things such as those yet to occur.

Without this ability to infer things conceptually,

One would become like newborn infants.

Having engaged in evaluation and inference by means of a conceptual mind, we can understand those things that are not evident. There are different kinds of conceptual minds. One particular kind is the conceptual mind of recollection, that is to say, memory. For example, I did something when I was a child, and now, with this kind of conceptual mind, I can recall these things. Some yogins endowed with superhuman powers can even recall their past lives. There are many stories in the Buddha casual stage that the Buddha knew hidden things from his many lives during previous cosmic ages.

I once had a visitor from abroad, who related some stories about his previous lives. At first, I wondered whether these stories were true. But later, I felt that he could genuinely recall his previous lives. On one occasion, he asked everyone around to step

back. He would tell his stories to no one except to his master, a friend next to him, and myself. He said that about one thousand and two hundred years ago, he lived by the Qinghai Lake in a family of five. After his parents died, he took his two younger brothers with him to roam in the desert, where they led a rather hard life. At one point, they met a teacher who brought them to Lhasa, where they lived ever after. The man told his stories in a vivid, orderly manner, captivating my attention. He told stories about several lifetimes, and his memory of them seemed quite fresh. As I listened to his seemingly endless wanderings in samsara, at times I felt joy, while at other times I felt disgust.

Certainly, today many people claim to be able to recall previous lives. But it is hard to tell whether these stories are true or false, for some of these people have ulterior motives. Still, this man seemed genuinely able to remember his previous lives. He said that because of these very experiences he had no uncertainty about causality and samsara. In addition, he had offered the wealth he earned during an entire lifetime to charity and other funds. And so, in examining many of his ways of acting and speaking, I have come to believe that what he told must be true. This, too, is an example of a conceptual mind of recollection.

Moreover, there exists one kind of conceptual mind that is characterized by pursuing, that is, the conceptual mind that pursues things in the future. For example, this mind wonders about future events such as what I will become in the future, how my business will develop in the future, what kind of position I will obtain in the future, what kind of friends I will have in the future.

There is another kind, namely the conceptual mind that explores and analyzes the truth of things. For example, we say: "The pillar is impermanent, because it is created." When we ask the question whether the pillar is permanent or impermanent, we are indeed using analysis with this kind of conceptual mind.

Furthermore, there are still other kinds of conceptual mind, such as correct

conceptual minds and false conceptual minds. For example, a correct conceptual mind is a mind that sees a rope as a rope, whereas a false conceptual mind is a mind that sees a rope as a snake.

If without conceptual minds, inferences would be impossible, and then we would become like newborn infants, who do not have any knowledge about anything. One of my relatives, although he is over about fifty years old, looks in fact like a newborn. A while ago, after his mother died, he knew nothing about what he had to do. “My mother died, what do I do now? Should I go myself to draw water or not?” On that occasion, many of my relatives wondered why he was so dull as if he was newborn while he was already a grown-up

Today, many people do not have the slightest doubt about whether the past lives exist or not. They also have no single doubt about whether the future births and deaths in samsara exist or not. All they care for is the short span of a few decades in this very lifetime. If so, when it comes to answer crucial questions, these people will differ in no way from newly born infants. Therefore, as followers of the Buddha, it is very important to engage with our conceptual mind in reasoning and observation about the existence of past and future lives. People should not become like newborns when facing the most important things. This situation would not be ideal.

The Reasons being Used to Infer

J2: The Reasons being Used to Infer

[VERSE 33]

Reasoning is to know something based on another.

With an establishable position,

And with both positive and negative logical pervasion,

When these three prerequisites are complete, it is an unmistaken reasoning.

To understand something that is to be established by means of inference with a reason, is what we call reasoning of that which can be established. For example, with “smoke on a mountain” or the fact of “a pillar being produced” as the reason for inference, it is possible to reach the conclusion of the existence of fire on a mountain, or the reality of impermanence of the pillar.

When we engage inference, we must first verify whether the reason is true about the logical subject. If it is true, we say, “the position is establishable”, we then move to the second step in our verification, namely, asking whether there are positive and negative logical pervasion. If the reason is not true about the logical subject, we say, “it is not establishable”, and consequently there is no need to observe positive and negative logical pervasion.

Take, for example, the following reasoning: “The pillar is impermanent, because it is produced.” First of all, the fact of being produced is true about the pillar. Therefore, the position is establishable. Secondly, if the pillar is produced, it must be impermanent, which means the positive logical pervasion exists. Thirdly, if the pillar is not impermanent, that is, the condition of being impermanent is reversed, the fact of being produced cannot be established. Therefore, there is negative logical pervasion.

In this manner, when the establishable position along with positive and negative logical pervasion are complete, we say that the inference meets the three prerequisites. Hence, it is an unmistaken inference.

In the incipit of the first chapter of his *Commentary on Valid Knowledge*, Dharmakirti says, “The establishable position and its pervasions, serve as an inference that includes three modes.” What this means is that the characteristics of a correct inference is that the three modes of establishable position, positive logical pervasion and negative logical pervasion are complete. In other words, inferential reasoning must rely on the existence of all these three prerequisites. Hence, the reason and that which is to be proved have a relation of mutual existence and cessation.

[VERSE 34]

From the reasons,

Which are ascertained by direct perception,

Specific hidden things can be inferred.

Based on the relation between a reason and what is to be proved,

As discussed above, inferential reasoning has its roots in direct perception. Based on the reasons that any of the four kinds of direct perception ascertains, we can know hidden things that we are unable to see through direct perception. For example, if you are well trained in Buddhist Logic, past and future lives, which are abstract and hidden things, can be ascertained when you engage analysis through scriptural proof and inference, and you will be fully convinced that people do have past and future lives, for this inference is entirely correct. It is unwise, for us and for others, not to agree with a valid inference of which three prerequisites are complete.

Clearly, many hidden things in the world require inference in order to be known. However, so many people in today’s world simply have no idea of what these principles of reasoning mean. For the objects that the six sensory consciousnesses, i.e., visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, along with mental consciousness, are unable to

perceive, they treat them as mysterious phenomena, doubting and denying them, or believing that these things cannot be known. This is unreasonable.

There are also explorers who want to explore very profound things with conceptual minds and with measuring devices. However, this will not work in every case, and they will be disappointed. They spend large sums of money to improve the quality of their cameras. But even with a perfect camera, they cannot take pictures of things that are not objects of their cameras, such as previous and future lives. But if one is truly equipped with wisdom, through the valid reasoning one is able to know that, on the conventional level, previous and future lives exist, the inconceivable empowerment of the Three Jewels is not deceptive, and so on.

[VERSE 35]

***There are reasoning by the effect, reasoning by the nature,
And reasoning concerning the nonexistent that negates something,
Including reasoning of non-observation, and reasoning of the observation of the
opposite.
All reasonings belong to such three kinds.***

To prove something is true, inferential reasoning must depend on the relation between a reason and what is to be proved. In respect to establishment, there are two types of reasoning: reasoning by the effect and reasoning by the nature. Reasoning by the effect depends on a relation of cause and production. That is, it depends on the fact that one thing produces another that one can deduce a cause through its effect. For example, we say, “There is fire on the mountain, because there is smoke.” Here, one infers the existence of fire, which is the cause, through the existence of smoke, which is the effect of fire. Reasoning by the nature, on the other hand, depends on a relation of the same entity. That is, one knows one thing through another thing because both of them abide in the same entity. We say, for example, “The pillar is impermanent, because it is produced.” One thus infers the impermanence of the pillar

through the reason of being produced. Both impermanence and the fact of being produced are of the same entity of the pillar.

Furthermore, in terms of refutation, reasoning can be of two types: reasoning by the non-observation of the entity, and reasoning by the observation of the opposite. Both of them belong to the reasoning concerning the nonexistent, which are employed in the negation of anything that is being refuted. As to the former, for something that must be visible as long as it exists, if it is not seen, then it cannot exist. For example, we take the following statement: “There is not a bottle in front of me, because I have not directly seen one.” Here, the negation is performed through the reasoning of not seeing the entity. The other type of the negation of the existence of a phenomenon is performed through reasoning by the observation of its opposite. For example, we say: “I could not have a strong cold sensation, because of the presence of a strong heat sensation.”

In sum, all inferences are included in these three types of reasoning: reasoning by the nature, reasoning by the effect, and reasoning concerning the nonexistent. We can know hidden things thanks to these three kinds of reasoning.

The Modes being Used to Infer

J3: The Ways being Used to Infer

K1: Division into Three or Six Types according to the Objects to be Ascertained

[VERSE 36]

Because in the ultimate reality, all appearing things,

Are of equality by nature,

With a pure mind one sees the pure reality,

Thus one abides in the nature of purity.

When we engage analysis by means of a valid knowledge of the ultimate, we will understand that, in the ultimate reality, all things are equal and pure by nature. Equality and purity are the real aspect of the ultimate and the real aspect of the conventional, respectively.

By means of the Middle Way's reasoning of vajra-splinter, or the reasoning of neither one nor many, or by means of certain reasonings of tantrayana, we will understand that, on the ultimate level, all things in samsara and in nirvana are indistinguishable in the way that they are empty in nature, beyond all conceptual elaborations, free from the eight extremes, and cannot be grasped at all. This is what we call equality, or emptiness. The Buddha taught these principles concerning the ultimate reality in the second turning of the Dharma wheel.

Such equality has a real aspect on a conventional level, an aspect that is perceived by the pure mind of the enlightened beings. In particular, to a buddha's wisdom that knows the multiplicity of phenomena, or to a bodhisattva's wisdom emerging from meditation, the entities of all things take the real aspect of purity. Take an example of a bowl of water, the different beings of the six destinies do not see it exactly in the

same way. A hell being sees it as burning molten iron which can burn skin and flesh. A hungry ghost sees a bowl of unbearably foul-smelling blood and pus. When human beings and the majority of animals see it, they regard it as real water that one can drink to assuage one's thirst. Because of their relatively light accumulation of unwholesome deeds, demigods and gods see it as the pure nectar. In the formless realm, some beings see it as mental consciousness, while others see it as empty space. A vidyadhara endowed with realization sees it as the Mother Buddha Mamaki. Finally, to a buddha's wisdom that knows the nature of all phenomena, there is nothing but the equality of the true reality that is beyond all conceptual elaborations. And to a buddha's wisdom of multiplicities, it is the clarity of the pure realm of reality, yet such clarity is not something that one can grasp conceptually. From the perspective of true reality, the impure objects that we now see are indeed perfectly pure.

Today, in our degenerate times of the five impurities, the world that appears to us as impure is indeed a pure land to buddhas and bodhisattvas. In the *Essence of Clear Light* it is said: "Why is it pure? Because all buddhas and bodhisattvas see that which is pure." If someone maintained that the valid knowledge of buddhas and bodhisattvas is mistaken, but the valid knowledge of common beings is faultless, then, regardless of who spoke this statement, it would be inadmissible. A defiled consciousness cannot damage the undefiled wisdom of a noble one. Therefore, we should know that, on an ultimate level, all things are entirely empty and beyond all conceptual thoughts; and on a conventional level, what we deluded beings see is provisionally impure, while what the enlightened noble ones see is truly pure. It is just like that to someone who is affected by cataracts, a sea conch will always be yellow; whereas to someone whose vision is free from cataracts, the conch will be the white color. This is the real aspect of reality on a conventional level.

[VERSE 37]

Real things arise depending on conditions,

Unreal things depend on conceptual imputation.

Therefore, both the real and the unreal,

Are inherently empty in nature.

In our world, all external things such as pillars and bottles, together with things included in minds and mental concomitants, arise entirely depending on various causes and conditions. In contrast, uncompounded things such as empty space, or unreal things such as the son of a barren woman, are conceptually imputed by sentient beings. As stated in *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*, because real things arise entirely depending on causes and conditions, they are ultimately empty. And furthermore, conceptual things also do not truly exist because they are just imputed by conception. For example, the son of a barren woman does not essentially exist as a material substance. It is merely imputed by our conceptual minds through language. Hence, as one properly observes real things and unreal things in the world through wisdom, one will find out that in essence they are all empty.

However, many ordinary beings were never trained in Buddhist Logic or in the Middle Way, not to mention in the non-dual realm of purity and equality explained in the unsurpassed Tantrayana. These beings lack the understanding of the truth that all things arising from causes and conditions are none other than emptiness. Therefore, they blindly pursue different things such as fames and wealth every day. Today, many people regard life, feelings, family, and work, as real things. Therefore, when issues arise concerning these things, they cannot let go of them, remaining obstinately trapped in delusion. The reason is, they do not understand that all things, compounded and uncompounded, real and unreal, are entirely empty and deceptive. Hence, people become continuously attached to things they regard as real, planting countless unwholesome seeds in their mental continuums, which, in turn, set them adrift in the

endless ocean of samsara. Imagine, on the other hand, that these beings understood that things arise and cease depending on causes and conditions. They would then recognize these very things as unreliable, and so they would naturally no longer pursue them by all means.

Therefore, we must understand that from the perspective of ultimate reality, the entities of both real and unreal things are entirely empty.

[VERSE 38]

In ultimate reality, the basis of emptiness,

And emptiness itself are inseparable.

Therefore, appearance and emptiness are the one that is inexpressible,

But can be known through individual's self-aware wisdom.

As explained above, all things appearing to the five sensory consciousnesses such as pillars and bottles are entirely empty. In addition, nonexistent things that negate existing things such as no-pillar and no-bottle are also empty. Hence, emptiness and appearance are indeed inseparable. That is to say, on the ultimate level of the true reality, the basis of emptiness such as bottles and emptiness itself that negates the existence of bottles are the one and inseparable. When our eyes see these things, we regard them to be existent, but their real entities are indeed empty. Despite their emptiness, these things are inseparable from the natural luminosity of the realm of reality. This is the meaning of the statement that appearances and emptiness are the one and inseparable, which is also acclaimed in the *Heart Sutra*, where it says: "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form; Form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form."

The limited and narrow conceptual minds of ordinary beings are indeed inadequate to conceive the true realm where appearance and emptiness are in perfect union. It is as if the dim light of a firefly is not comparable with the rays of the sun or the moon. In our present state, appearances are incompatible with emptiness, and

emptiness is incompatible with appearances. Therefore, the two cannot arise simultaneously. However, through one's faith in the teacher and in the Three Jewels, together with long and repeated cultivation, the non-dual wisdom perceiving the perfect union of emptiness and appearances will certainly arise in our mental continuum. Such is the specific state of the self-aware wisdom of the noble ones, as well as the inconceivable realm discussed in the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*.

If our mental continuums always remain in an ordinary being's state, we will keep indulging in samsara with great pain and delusion. However, when wisdom and compassion that surpass our present situation arise through continuous efforts, we will understand how truly inconceivable the Buddhadharmas are in power and in blessing. If we attain the realization through practice, no one will overturn our states, and we will also come to know that we have gone beyond the samsara of living and dying. I believe such achievement can happen in everyone's mental continuum.

K2: Division into Four Types according to the Modes of Establishment

[VERSE 39]

All types of establishment,

Summarize as proofs of existence and being.

All types of negation,

Condense into negation of existence and being.

As for the views concerning the knowable objects of the world, their establishment can be of two types: proof of something's "existence", and proof of something's "being". In contrast, the negation of all kinds of views can be summarized into "nonexistence" and "nonbeing".

First of all, when we establish a view, or affirm something, it must be either through its "being", namely through the phrase "it is", or through its "existence". Aside from these two, there is no other mode of affirmation or establishment. For example, we say, "There is fire on the mountain, because there is smoke." Accordingly, this

reasoning by the effect establishes that “there is” fire, namely the “existence” of fire. On the other hand, we say, “The pillar is impermanent, because it is created.” And this reasoning by the nature, in turn, establishes that the entity of the pillar “is” impermanent.

Secondly, all types of negation or refutation are performed by either “nonbeing”, namely through the phrase “it is not”, or by “nonexistence”, namely by saying, “there is not”. Likewise, there is no other mode of negation aside from these two. For example, we say, “There is no bottle before my eyes, because it was not seen by my direct perception.” Or, we say, “A cow is not a bottle, because it does not possess the particular characteristics of a bottle.” Therefore, regardless of whether we engage negation through direct perception or through inference, negation has to be performed by positing “nonexistence” or “nonbeing”, and these two modes encompass all possible meanings of negation. To translate this into Buddhist terms, we call “negation of existence” all negations that take the phrase “there is not”, while we call “negation of being” all negations that take the phrase “it is not”.

K3: Division into Two Types according to the Manners of Application

[VERSES 40~41]

Relying on valid knowledge,

Having established reasonings of establishment and negation,

One can also logically explain to others

Such establishment and negation.

To refute another’s points, one then either employs

An autonomous syllogism with three referential modes,

Or, uses what is accepted by the opponent,

To disprove it with consequentialist arguments.

We must refute illogical reasoning or establish logical reasoning by means of

unmistaken valid knowledge. In establishing or in refuting, we first correctly understand the subject that is under our observation by means of direct perception or inference. Only afterward do we establish our own logical views or negate the opponent's illogical views. This is what Sakya Pandita, in his *Treasure of Valid Knowledge and Reasoning*, discusses as inference for oneself and inference for another. A logical view is established in the mental continuum of oneself or another by means of autonomous syllogisms. On the other hand, in refuting the other's view, there are two methods of negation. The first method employs autonomous syllogisms with three inferential modes. With the second method, though the three elements are not complete, the opponent's assertions are taken as reasons to articulate the consequences.

In employing inference for another, at first, invalidate the opponent's wrong view, and then establish the correct view in his or her mind by means of an autonomous syllogism.

The Valid Knowledge of the Conventional

I2: The Classification of Inference

J1: Classification

K1: The Valid Knowledge of the Conventional

[VERSES 42~43]

As for the conventional level, there are two types of valid knowledge,

That in which reality and appearance are identical or different

Based on pure vision,

Or impure worldly vision.

These two types of conventional valid knowledge

Are like seeing with divine and human eyes.

The differences between these two,

Lie in their entity, cause, effect, and function.

There are two types of conventional valid knowledge. In the first type, reality and appearance are not identical, where the appearance is what is seen by a valid knowledge of worldly vision, that is, by the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile direct perception of ordinary beings, or to what they know through inference. The second type is the more profound and purified aspect, where reality and appearance are identical. This is the true conventional reality which is not visible to ordinary beings, for it can only be known by means of an enlightened being's valid knowledge of pure vision. To return to the example of the sea conch, the yellow color is seen by the eyes of a person affected by a cataract, the white color, proper to the conch, can only be seen by someone whose eyes are not damaged. So in seeing the white color of the conch, reality and appearance are identical, while in seeing the

yellow color, reality and appearance are different.

Therefore, the two types of conventional appearance are apprehended by means of an impure valid knowledge of worldly vision, and an unstained valid knowledge of pure vision. A valid knowledge of worldly vision includes both direct perception and inference. The objects seen by enlightened beings through their pure vision are entirely different from the objects that ordinary beings see.

These two types of valid knowledge resemble what is seen by humans and by gods. We have employed the example of the bowl of water, seen in many different ways by different beings such as humans and gods. Not only do gods see their own realm, but they also see the domain that is visible to humans. From this perspective, their vision is like a valid knowledge of pure vision. A noble one's valid knowledge of pure vision sees the illusory phenomena, such as a red pillar, that appear to us deluded beings. Meanwhile, a noble one's valid knowledge of pure vision also sees the purified domain of conventional reality. In contrast, human eyes only see their own domain, the ordinary things such as a pillar, but is utterly unable to see the subtle and pure realm of reality behind these things. So when we observed a bowl of water, as humans, we only see water but do not see divine nectar, let alone Mother Buddha Mamaki. Such is the disadvantage of the valid knowledge of worldly vision.

The message of this verse is extremely important. In general, treatises in Buddhist Logic such as the *Treasure of Valid Knowledge and Reasoning* and the *Commentary on Valid Knowledge* only discuss the valid knowledge of worldly vision, while they do not mention the valid knowledge of pure vision. Very few sutrayana works discuss this topic as clearly as *The Sword of Wisdom* does. Many teachings from tantrayana are indeed included in the present treatise directly or indirectly.

In Samantabhadra's *King of Aspiration*, it is said, "In a single dust mote, there are worlds equal in number to dust motes." A noble one's valid knowledge of pure vision is perfectly able to see this. In contrast, an ordinary being's valid knowledge of worldly

vision can only see the coarse but not the finest particles. Certainly, as taught in Buddhist Logic, a valid knowledge of worldly vision is still a type of valid knowledge for ordinary beings. Indeed, an ordinary being's valid knowledge is considered valid just because it is not deceptive for the ordinary phenomena. Yet, it does not count much when compared with a noble one's wisdom. In all events, for the time being, we can only consider it valid in this manner. For example, although a sea conch is white, until the eyes of a person affected by cataracts get better, all he sees is a yellow conch. Nevertheless, in so far as this person sees that conch, it does not mean that he has not seen a conch at all. It must be clear to us ordinary beings that the real conventional reality is not the way we now see things are. Until we reach a definite attainment, we will be unable to see it.

There are many instructions on this topic. For example, Mipham Rinpoche explained this topic clearly in his *Essence of Clear Light*. Once we have grasped the difference between the valid knowledge of pure vision and the valid knowledge of worldly vision, we will be able to further understand the views of tantrayana teachings expounded in such works as the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. Indeed, the views of the tantrayana teachings and the profound sections of the sutrayana teachings such as the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Diamond Sutra* are mutually inclusive.

To most people, this topic may be difficult to grasp. Still, it would be good even if we only understand the valid knowledge of worldly vision. Without Buddhist Logic, most people do not get even the valid knowledge of worldly vision, and they have no idea about direct perception or inference. Hence, their ways of acting will be based entirely on their own individual conceptual minds. There are many of such deluded beings in our world.

In studying the present treatise, we will know the following. We are able to realize part of the reality through our own valid knowledge. As for the remaining part, although we are now unable to realize it, we will have reason to believe that there is

certainly something purer behind what we see now. Suppose, then, that the person who is affected by cataracts is a wise person. No matter how he looks at the conch, all he sees is the yellow color. Yet, thanks to reasoning, he perfectly knows that, “When my eyes get better, I will then see the white conch.” Deep in his heart, he has such unshakeable confidence. Along the same line of reasoning, although we have not yet attained the realization that everything is entirely pure, all we should do now is to continue untroubled in our efforts. Eventually, there will be one day when we, too, will be like a noble one. At that time, from the perspective of the real entity of things, we will realize all things are empty, while from the perspective of their appearance, we will clearly see the domain of their purity, which are the true aspect on the conventional level.

Next, we will discuss the differences between valid knowledge of worldly vision and valid knowledge of pure vision, distinguishing them from the four perspectives of entity, cause, effect, and function. First, we will analyze valid knowledge of worldly vision.

[VERSE 44]

As a mind that is non-deceptive concerning worldly truths,

It arises from the perception of objects according to reality.

With respect to objects of worldly vision, it eliminates all misconceptions,

And perfectly apprehends the given object in corresponding context.

A valid knowledge of worldly vision is a type of mind that is non-deceptive in the apprehension of worldly truths concerning knowable objects that are objects of direct perception and inference. Hence, the verse says, “a mind that is non-deceptive concerning worldly truth.” It indicates that, compared to the objects of valid knowledge of pure vision or of valid knowledge of the ultimate, the objects of valid knowledge of worldly vision are relatively real, as they only appear in the ordinary world. So the entity of a valid knowledge of worldly vision is a type of mind that is non-

deceptive with respect to the appearances of this ordinary world.

For example, from the perspective of direct perception, when I look at a blue cloth with my eyes, what I see is indeed correct. In respect to the blue cloth, my consciousness will not be a deceptive subject. Hence, it will be a valid knowledge of worldly vision. On the other hand, from the perspective of inference, when I engage the reasoning that the pillar is impermanent because of being produced, the entity of the pillar is indeed impermanent. Substantially, there is no deception on this point, and the analysis by my conceptual consciousness is correct. This type of subject is called inference. A consciousness of direct perception and an inferential consciousness are thus called valid knowledge of worldly vision. As it is said in Buddhist Logic, direct perception and inference are both types of non-deceptive consciousness.

What is the cause of a valid knowledge of worldly vision? Direct perception arises when the six unmistakable sensory faculties and their respective objects come together, and as a result, these objects' own characteristics are perceived. In other words, the cause of direct perception is the coming together of such causes and conditions as the sensory faculties and their respective objects. On the other hand, inference is a consciousness that arises when reasoning is endowed with all necessary conditions. For example, when we infer the existence of fire on a mountain through the presence of smoke, we call the knowing subject inference. Therefore, the cause of inference is unmistakable reasoning.

Further, what is the function of a valid knowledge of worldly vision? From the perspective of inference, its function is to eliminate misconceptions such as taking something for what it is not. For example, the pillar is indeed impermanent, but some people doubt that it is actually not impermanent. Then we help these people understand the impermanence of the pillar through a correct syllogism, so that their earlier misconception is eliminated. From the perspective of direct perception, for example, the object being perceived is indeed a white cloth. But, because of cataracts,

we mistakenly regard it as a yellow cloth. If we eliminate the cataracts and perceive the white cloth, the eye consciousness will have thus eliminated the misconception that the cloth is yellow. Therefore, the function of the valid knowledge of worldly vision is to eliminate misconception concerning objects in this ordinary phenomenal world.

What is then the effect of a valid knowledge of worldly vision? It is to perfectly apprehends a given object in corresponding context without mistakenly taking it for other objects. If we understand what a valid knowledge of worldly vision is, we will avoid mistakes. For example, past and future lives are existent. Still we may regard them as nonexistent. Thanks to reasoning, we then come to believe in the existence of past and future lives, thus eliminate this wrong view. Hence, the view that matches the relative truth arises and we perfectly hold such view. This is the effect of a valid knowledge of worldly vision.

In general, all cognition and analysis in the world is possible thanks to the valid knowledge of worldly vision. Today, if scientists are able to reach correct conclusions by engaging analysis, it is thanks to the valid knowledge of worldly vision. Some conclusions, for example, on chemistry reactions or atomic structure, are reached through direct perception relying on scientific instruments. Some others are reached at a later time thanks to applied valid reasoning. Certainly, there exist two kinds of reasonings. As discussed above, the first kind is reasoning endowed with sufficient evidence and meeting the three prerequisites. The conclusions reached through this syllogism are one hundred percent correct. For example, although astronomers might be unable to see things for themselves, through reasoning and calculations they may predict the occurrence of some events or some transformations in the future, which eventually become true.

On the other hand, the other kind of reasonings are the incorrect ones. For example, some diviners predict the occurrences of such future events as wars and earthquakes, creating a state of anxiety among people. Some of our Buddhist friends

like to read these things. Once a Buddhist friend wrote me a letter. He claimed that a war would certainly break out after some years. He said many things, such as how I should escape the affected areas. In any event, most of it was the nonsense of some diviners, and simply provided groundless fears. Diviners do not possess an unerring valid knowledge of worldly vision. If they had it, they can reach absolutely precise conclusions about past and future without any mistake, just like what Dignaga and Dharmakirti did by inference. So as practitioners, we should not pay attention to such invalid reasoning. Having studied the philosophical doctrines, we should be able to make our own choices, and should not live in worry and fear every day.

Still today, many people in the world do not study what should be studied. On the contrary, they study what should not be studied. In many countries, people spend their entire lives on things that truly lack any purpose. They waste their lives, without giving them real meaning. We now have this precious human body, extremely difficult to obtain. Therefore, we must work hard to listen, reflect, and meditate. And if we lack the capability to listen and reflect on big treatises, as Mipham Rinpoche once said, raising an important point, we should at least chant mantras and adamantine words that were handed down to us by the great masters of the past, and train our minds by applying the proper instructions. Apart from this, in our short human life, most conceptual thoughts of today's world have no true meaning to us.

In the foregoing, we have discussed the valid knowledge of worldly vision. We will now turn to the valid knowledge of pure vision. We will also explain its content from the perspective of the four aspects of entity, cause, effect, and function.

[VERSE 45]

The extensive and vast wisdom,

Arises from apprehending the nature of reality.

In respect to the objects that are beyond conception, it eliminates all misconceptions,

And has the wisdom that knows all phenomena as its result.

The valid knowledge of pure vision is essentially an “extensive and vast wisdom”. It is a wisdom that comprehends in an undecieving manner the extensive and vast objects of knowledge. In their realized states buddhas and bodhisattvas possess a wisdom that knows all phenomena. With such wisdom, they understand numerous things in the vast realm of knowable objects, which common beings are absolutely unable to grasp. This is similar to those endowed with knowledge of past lives who see many things from past lives; those endowed with divine vision who see things that common people are unable to see, such as the entire realms of demons and gods, or innumerable beings in the water that Purna, one of the Buddha’s great disciples, clearly saw.

In addition, the Buddha directly perceives that in a single mote of dust there are innumerable worlds and tathagatas, and each single moment contains billions of eons of past and future. The inconceivable merit and wisdom of all buddhas such as these, as well as the profound truths of all things of the world, can all be known through the valid knowledge of pure vision. This type of wisdom indeed exists, but is beyond our conceptual minds.

What is the cause of the valid knowledge of pure vision? The main cause is the concentration of fundamental wisdom. First, a noble one absorbs into the concentration of fundamental wisdom, abiding in a state beyond all conceptual elaborations. Arising from meditation, he or she knows all the things of the world as if they were in the palm of his or her hand.

Certainly, it is very difficult for common beings to possess the valid knowledge of pure vision right at this moment. However, through listening, reflection, and meditation, it is possible to have a rough idea in the form of general characteristics about the purity of all things. Although their divine eye might not be open yet, those who listen, reflect, and meditate on the Middle Way or on Vajrayana, will know things that common people cannot grasp, such as the subtleties of the mind, or the emptiness

and purity of all things in the world.

For example, ordinary people think that a pillar exists in a permanent way. But as we study the philosophical doctrines, we know well that a pillar is momentary and impermanent. In terms of this particular view, we are already beyond the common people of the world. Similarly, those who have studied genuine Buddhist works know, and therefore hold the views, that the entire structure of the human body is unclean and that samsara is suffering. In contrast, those who never studied the philosophical doctrines persist in thinking that the human body is clean and attractive and that samsara is delightful.

In several of his profound instruction works, Mipham Rinpoche emphasized that the valid knowledge of the conventional must be classified into these two types. If not so, the views of the valid knowledge of pure vision could not be subsumed under any type of valid knowledge. It cannot be grasped by direct perception or inference of ordinary beings. Hence, it is unreasonable to subsume it under the valid knowledge of worldly vision. On the other hand, it is also unreasonable to subsume it under the valid knowledge of the ultimate, either the seemingly real or the real ultimate truth.

These precious instructions handed down by the lineage masters are indeed sublime, but some people do not clearly understand their profound meaning. If you grasped its profound meaning, it would truly be an invaluable and precious wish-fulfilling gem. However, without grasping the meaning and just resting on a mere literal level, it is not so helpful. It is like in the field of electronics. If you do not know theory, when the result of your measurement presents some variables, you will be at a loss as to what to do. But if you know theory, you will handle matters with ease regardless of variations or different kinds of environments. On a similar account, in the Buddhadharma, and especially in the Middle Way and Buddhist Logic, it is necessary to have a specialized knowledge. When you genuinely understand the valid knowledge of the ultimate and of the conventional, as well as the valid knowledge of pure vision

and of worldly vision, regardless of your environment, you will not be mistaken in respect to the examination of any phenomenon. Once you have made these views relevant to yourself, whether you are in the West or in the East, you will be able to enter into mutual contact with different cultures. In comparing their perspectives with your own Buddhist perspective, you will be able to point out which of their views are inadequate. In such a manner, your views, too, can adapt to different cultures and regions.

What is the function of the valid knowledge of pure vision? It is to eliminate all doubts and misconceptions in respect to the objects that are impossible to perceive for the valid knowledge of worldly vision. Today, scientists believe that things that we are completely unable to perceive with our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body, do truly exist. For example, according to legend, somewhere in the United States there was a gathering of spirits. And these spirits were perceived by someone's direct perception. But when scientists tried to take photos of them they could find no spirit whatsoever. In turn, scholars in the medical and psychological sciences came to the conclusion that there was indeed something uncanny about this place. Still, human eyes saw nothing there, and cameras, together with experimental instruments, were also proved useless. Current scientific knowledge has found it impossible to provide an explanation. Indeed, with a valid knowledge of pure vision, the understanding of these events would have been as easy as falling off a log. In sum, the function of the valid knowledge of pure vision is to ascertain by means of transcendental wisdom things that common beings are usually unable to see and hear.

In today's society, with no understanding of the valid knowledge of pure vision, many research problems will end up with a question mark, remaining unresolved mysteries. These worldly beings look truly in distress, for no matter how much effort they put into research, they only engage it with a conceptual mind, and no matter how long they seek to uncover a result, they are still unable to do so. It is as if one tries to

pierce a rock with a wooden peg, but it is in vain even when the wooden peg gets damaged. In fact, even though you may have not achieved the valid knowledge of pure vision, once you have understood it, you will have a means to solve all sorts of problems.

The result of the valid knowledge of pure vision is to possess the wisdom that thoroughly knows the conventional truth of all things, namely, the wisdom that knows the multiplicity of phenomena that is attained at the time of the resulting state of buddhahood.

These teachings are quite crucial for our study and practice. When I relate stories or simple teachings about cause and effect many people look extremely interested. But if I teach slightly deeper aspects of doctrine they lose interest, and begin napping. Today, people who have obtained degrees at higher institutions are burdened by conceptual thoughts. They regard themselves as very wise. But when they encounter the doctrines of Buddhist Logic or the Middle Way, they would feel as if their own wisdom fails to keep pace. On one occasion, someone even told me, “It would be good enough if you taught simple teachings on a daily basis. You should not teach the Middle Way or Buddhist Logic. These topics are too profound, and today no one discusses such deep teachings any longer.” Indeed, we should not limit our study to the instructions for beginners. We should further our study with the profound instructions of the Middle Way and Buddhist Logic, and with the even more profound instructions of Vajrayana. The benefit that many people can gather from these instructions is truly inconceivable. In particular, a few stories about the retribution of cause and effect will not be enough to satisfy the aspirations of individuals who already possess a certain level of wisdom and a trusting mind. In examining such profound instructions, the attitude in one’s mental continuum will certainly undergo a transformation. Therefore, we should all pay great attention to such profound teachings.

The Valid Knowledge of the Ultimate

K2: The Valid Knowledge of the Ultimate

[VERSE 46]

There are two types of ultimate truth,

Seemingly real and real ultimate truth.

As for the subject contemplating the ultimate truth,

Its valid knowledge also becomes twofold.

There are two types of valid knowledge of the ultimate: seemingly real and real ultimate truth. Seemingly real ultimate truth can be analyzed by the common beings of the world, for example, when we say that the pillar is nonexistent, that it is empty. What is meant here by the term empty is that something does not exist after being examined. In other words, it is mere emptiness that negates the extreme of existence. In this sense, it is called seemingly real ultimate truth, or simile ultimate truth.

From the worldly perspective, the seemingly real ultimate truth is necessary. Since beginningless time, sentient beings have regarded all the phenomena of the world as truly existent. Yet, having engaged the reasonings of the Middle Way to examine them, we know well that all such things are nonexistent. For example, everyone believes that the “I” exists. But upon analysis we know that the “I” is utterly nonexistent. This is the no-self of persons taught in the common vehicle, the realization of which is already quite extraordinary. The level of “emptiness” where the “I”, or the bottle, simply do not exist, is called “mere emptiness”, which is also what we call seemingly real ultimate truth. Compared with the view that regards all things in the world as existent, seemingly real ultimate truth is supreme, for it destroys the clinging to the illusion that since beginningless time, regards “I”, and all things, as truly existent.

Real ultimate truth is ascertained in the same way as in Nagarjuna's *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*, where all things are free from the four extremes and the eight elaborations, and where there is absolutely no trace of conceptual elaboration— It is not existence, it is not nonexistence, it is neither existence nor nonexistence, it is also not not-existence neither not-nonexistence. In this ultimate true reality, all things are free from linguistic expression, conceptual elaboration, illusory thought, and attachment, and further, no single thing is existent, and yet no single thing is nonexistent, too. In reference to real ultimate truth, there is no other way for common beings to express it other than by the word “inconceivable”. It is similar to a blind person's attempt to describe the shape of an elephant, which is impossible. This realm is what we call real ultimate truth.

Precisely because both seemingly real and real ultimate truth are present on the entity of things, the wisdom that apprehends it also divides into a valid knowledge of seemingly real ultimate truth and a valid knowledge of real ultimate truth. These two types of valid knowledge are very necessary. Without them, it would be impossible to know these two types of ultimate truth. In the *Ornament of the Middle Way*, it is said,

Since with the ultimate this is attuned,

It is referred to as the ultimate.

And yet the actual ultimate is free

From constructs and elaborations.

The former two lines explain seemingly real ultimate truth, while the latter two explain real ultimate truth. Because it accords with ultimate truth, it is called the ultimate truth. In ultimate reality, however, it is entirely free from conceptual elaborations, hence it is called real ultimate truth.

It is necessary to distinguish between seemingly real and real ultimate truth. Without this distinction, it would be impossible to grasp the correct meaning. In the *Treasure of the Middle Way*, it is said, “If, in this regard, there were no staircase which

is the real conventional truth, wishing to climb the palace of ultimate truth, would become illogical to the sage.” What this means is that we must possess the staircase of the seemingly real ultimate truth. Without this staircase of mere emptiness, we will be utterly unable to climb the palace of real ultimate truth. From the perspective of the sage, it would be illogical. This is the reason why in the Middle Way one first analyzes mere emptiness, and only after that does one examine the emptiness of the real ultimate truth that is free from the four extremes and the eight elaborations. So, we must all understand how ultimate truth divides into these two types. In many of his works, Mipham Rinpoche proposes this type of analysis with skillful instructions.

Summary of the Two Valid Knowledges

J2: Summary

[VERSE 47]

Relying on the former, one reaches the latter.

Like impaired vision that is healed and made pure,

When the eye of valid knowledge is fully developed,

One clearly sees the truths of purity and equality.

In the foregoing, we have discussed the valid knowledge of the conventional and the valid knowledge of the ultimate. We explained that the valid knowledge of the conventional divides into the valid knowledge of worldly vision and the valid knowledge of pure vision. As for the valid knowledge of the ultimate, we illustrated its division into valid knowledge of seemingly real ultimate truth and valid knowledge of real ultimate truth. How can these four types of valid knowledge be realized? As stated in *The Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras*, it is in the manner of the production of a later effect from an earlier cause.

This can be compared to the situation of the people who have cataracts. Through such medical treatment as drugs, as the cataracts are gradually removed, external objects will become increasingly clearer. Once the illness of the eyes is completely healed, external forms can be seen with great clarity. Likewise, as beginners we should first gain a clear understanding of direct perception and inference, and these are the very basic knowledge in Buddhist Logic. Subsequently, with the aid of scriptural authority we should then develop certainty about the valid knowledge of pure vision. In this manner, we will have grasped both the valid knowledge of pure vision and the valid knowledge of worldly vision. Furthermore, as for the valid knowledge of the

ultimate, we should first gain initial understanding of mere emptiness. In due course, we will move further to develop certainty, and to generate faith, about the ultimate meaning of emptiness that is beyond conceptual elaboration in the Middle Way. Finally, our mental continuum will merge with the wisdom of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, and reach the state that is undifferentiated from their wisdom.

Certainly, the attainment of this level does not come by as fast as we might think. We can compare this situation to the seeking of knowledge in the world. One first goes to the kindergarten. Then, climbing level after level, one goes to elementary, middle, and high school, and finally to college. Once in college, one may then engage the following thought: “Oh! The knowledge I have accumulated at the kindergarten is indispensable for the things I have to study right now. Without such basic knowledge, my foundations would be unstable. Meanwhile, what I have learned at the kindergarten is already part of the wisdom I have obtained through college.” Along the same reasoning, once we reach the highest level, what we see through direct perception, or what we know through inference, including the seemingly real ultimate truth, is all part of our final wisdom.

There are two perspectives about seeing the ultimate truth of everything. One perspective is about clearly seeing the great purity lacking all stains, which is the original nature of both the world of sentient beings and the material world. This is through the valid knowledge of pure vision. Another perspective is about clearly seeing the great equality of the myriads of things through the valid knowledge of the ultimate. Mipham Rinpoche discussed the two perspectives of purity and equality in the context of the *Essence of Clear Light*. These views are of great importance.

As for the aspect of purity, the tantrayana teachings contain very clear instructions. In particular, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* has superior teachings about the reason that all external objects and all subjects are pure. In the sutrayana teachings, such as the *Uttaratantra Shastra* and the *In Praise of Dharmadhatu*, also discuss at length the

aspect of purity of the tathagatagarbha. As for the aspect of equality, it is the great emptiness free from the four extremes and the eight elaborations. This emptiness is taught vastly in the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*, and Nagarjuna's *Collection of Middle Way Reasoning*, with emphasis on *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*, also discusses it extensively. Therefore, regarding sutrayana practice, the second and the third turning of the Dharma wheel must be studied and practiced in combination. The main topic in the third turning is about the valid knowledge of pure vision, while the main topic in the second turning is about the valid knowledge of the ultimate.

In his *Essence of Clear Light*, Mipham Rinpoche explains equality and purity in a very clear manner. If you get a chance to study this work, you will gain a clear knowledge of the tantrayana teachings and, especially, of the valid knowledge of pure vision. In the present text the valid knowledge of pure vision is mentioned only briefly, but it is already quite clear compared to other sutrayana treatises. But when you engage analysis through the teachings of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, the depth of your knowledge of this topic will be entirely different. You will understand that, on a conventional level, everything is of such great purity, and there is no single thing that is not pure.

On the topic of emptiness, if you have studied such works as of *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*, the *Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way*, the *Introduction to the Middle Way*, *The Ornament of the Middle Way*, the *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*, the *Sixty Verses on Reasoning*, *The Precious Garland on the Middle Way*, you should have sufficient familiarity with the views of the Middle Way. It does not mean that you have realized the Middle Way, but that you must have some understanding and experience of it.

Doubts: Is It Necessary to Establish Valid Knowledge?

I3: Dispel Doubts

J1: Overall Explanation

K1: Is It Necessary to Establish Valid Knowledge?

[VERSE 48]

Non-conceptual and conceptual minds,

Sometimes perceiving two moons, dreaming, or taking a rope for a snake,

Distinguish into mistaken and unmistaken,

Thus becoming valid and invalid knowledge.

It would be unreasonable for anyone to think that it is unnecessary to appreciate the division into valid and invalid knowledge. In Buddhist Logic, valid and invalid knowledge must be distinguished. If not so, it would be impossible to analyze any topics. The minds of worldly beings distinguish into the two types of conceptual and non-conceptual mind. In turn, each divides into the two types of mistaken and unmistaken.

What are the mistaken non-conceptual minds? One kind is mistaken sensory consciousness, while the other is mistaken mental consciousness. When the eye faculty becomes polluted, or when it becomes slightly compressed, two moons appear to the eye consciousness. This is a mistaken sensory consciousness. In fact, there cannot be two moons in the sky, yet they simply appear in this way when the eye faculty receives a stimulus. On the other hand, according to Buddhist Logic, dreams we have when we fall asleep are a kind of non-conceptual mistaken mental consciousness.

What kind of mistakes do conceptual minds make? For example, taking a mirage

as water, or taking a colored rope as a venomous snake. People who are not very daring, and who particularly fear snakes, will believe that a rope is a snake. Even in seeing a snake portrayed in a photo, some might be so scared as to drop the photo on the floor.

What types of correct, unmistaken minds are there? To see one moon in the sky with one's eyes is a correct, non-conceptual sensory consciousness. Any sight outside that appears to your non-conceptual mental consciousness is a correct non-conceptual mental consciousness. In the case of taking a patterned rope for a patterned rope, this type of apprehension is a correct conceptual mental consciousness.

Therefore, mistaken and unmistaken cognitions can be called valid and invalid knowledge. As it is also said in *The Introduction to the Middle Way*,

And everything the six undamaged senses grasp

Within the ordinary experience of the world

Is held as true, according to the world.

The rest, according to the world, is false.

The objects perceived by the six undamaged sensory faculties, are what the beings of the world know, and are established as real, and the rest are established as distortions. In other words, what is perceived by any of the unimpaired six sensory faculties is an object of worldly valid knowledge. To the world, such object is established as real. If one knows about such a worldly object, he is considered to have a valid knowledge. But in all other circumstances, such as in the case of a damaged sensory consciousness, its object of knowledge would be called a distortion, hence a cognition occurring at this moment would be an invalid knowledge. In Chandrakirti's view, this is the way in which we should distinguish distortion and non-distortion. As it is said in a sutra, "All consciousnesses arisen from damaged sensory faculties are invalid knowledges, such as illusory hair and a double moon."

Therefore, on a conventional level, we should know that knowledge of the white

color as the original color of the conch is a valid knowledge; yet, the belief that the color of the conch is yellow is an invalid knowledge. Also, seeing a single moon in the sky is a valid knowledge, whereas a double moon is an invalid knowledge. More importantly, the cognition of past and future lives is a valid knowledge, while to regard past and future lives as nonexistent is an invalid knowledge.

[VERSE 49]

Lacking valid and invalid knowledge,

The mistaken as the deluded, and the unmistaken as the real

Would never be distinguishable,

Therefore, no doctrinal tradition would possibly exist.

If there were no valid and invalid knowledge in the world, the categories of correct and incorrect would vanish entirely. Thus, distinctions such as taking the mistaken for deluded, and the unmistaken for real, would become entirely impossible in the world.

Today, some practitioners say, “As for valid and invalid knowledge, Buddhist Logic and the Middle Way, none of these is important. Just practice and you will be alright. Chant the name of Amitabha Buddha every day and that will be enough.” However, to merely chant Amitabha’s name, confusing at the same time everything else as a chaotic jumble, you will not know whether you are even chanting in the right way. It is entirely illogical to think in this manner.

We must distinguish clearly what is correct and what is incorrect in the world. If not, there would be no knowledge in the world to distinguish that the non-Buddhist views such as Lokayata, positing the nonexistence of past and future lives, are mistaken, and that Buddhist viewpoints such as the Mind-only school, positing the recognition of everything as mind, are correct. With no valid knowledge, how will one choose the correct doctrinal tradition? We did not take refuge of the Three Jewels blindly. We pay homage and take refuge only because we truly regard the Three Jewels as the source of all merits and empowerment. We choose to follow a teacher only after

we have observed through wisdom, and have reached the confidence that the teacher is truly endowed with religious qualities, and will help us transform our mental continuum with his or her compassionate aspiration to awakening. And, if he or she does not possess these qualities, we will then depart and find another teacher. Why? Because we have the wisdom that distinguishes between valid and invalid knowledge.

With no clear eyes that distinguish valid from invalid knowledge, all things in the world will then become confused one with the other, the entire world plunging into chaos. There is no logic in so doing. Therefore, we should not mix everything together. If we thought it were logical to do so, then a trash bin would be no different from your mug. Does this then mean that you have attained the non-conceptual domain of a noble person? Not at all, for you still have concepts. That being so, you must still conceptually make choices about every little thing in the world. In Buddhism, you must know exactly what you must and what must not do.

Doubts: Can Valid Knowledge be Established?

K2: Can Valid Knowledge be Established?

[VERSES 50~51]

***Having investigated the true reality,
Regardless of direct perception, inference,
Invalid knowledge, or any other means of establishment,
All such kinds of conceptual elaborations,
Turn out empty by their very nature.
Hence, their being free from all conceptual elaborations,
Just as heat is a property of fire,
Is a feature of all conventional constructs.***

Some may ask the following question: “In analyzing ultimate truth, direct perception and inference cannot be established. Thus, what is the use of this manner of establishing?” Certainly, when we investigate into the ultimate, direct perception and inference are both empty by nature. There is absolutely no doubt about this point. However, on a conventional level these types of valid knowledge are indispensable. We must have them for sure. As Mipham Rinpoche once said, it is not easy to walk down the road if one has no eyes; similarly, with no understanding of Buddhist Logic and with no apprehension of valid knowledge, one is left destitute. Regardless of what one does, everything will become difficult.

In Buddhism, it is very difficult to accomplish any practice if one has no understanding of Buddhist Logic and the Middle Way, even though one really wishes to practice. Take, for example, the case of an illiterate person in our world. Despite the wish to engage in an enterprise or to open a business, it is impossible for him or her to

carry on in practice due to lack of necessary knowledge. Likewise, we need the illuminating eyes of wisdom in the course of the study and practice of the Dharma.

Here, the verses say that, regarding the true reality, if we use thorough analysis, direct perception, inference, invalid knowledge, valid knowledge, subjects and objects of negation, and everything else that are established in the world, are all conceptual elaborations. However many things of establishment there are, there are equal number of conceptual elaborations, for all are conventional constructs. Therefore, valid knowledge is a conceptual elaboration, invalid knowledge is also a conceptual elaboration, that which is correct is a conceptual elaboration, and that which is not correct is also a conceptual elaboration. The very nature of valid and invalid knowledge is sheer emptiness, and beyond the four extremes and the eight elaborations. And this very nature of emptiness is neither separate nor combined with all valid and invalid knowledges, wisdoms and wrong views. It is like heat, which must exist together with fire. The nature of all conceptual elaborations is empty and beyond elaboration, for there is nothing that goes beyond emptiness, nor has there ever been anything that went beyond it.

Therefore, when we inquire into the true reality, none of direct perception, inference, and the valid knowledge of pure vision, is beyond emptiness. However, while they are beyond discrimination on an ultimate level, are they also beyond discrimination on a conventional level? Not in the slightest. We must understand this point.

[VERSE 52]

Therefore, appearance and emptiness,

Are inseparable in everything,

As skillful means and that which arise from skillful means.

If one is negated, the other is not affirmed.

As discussed in the foregoing, once appearances, including bottle and pillar that

we see now, are placed under investigation, their entities are found to be absolutely not established. Appearances are neither separate from, nor combined with emptiness that is beyond conceptual elaboration. Such is the nature of all things.

Appearances are known as skillful means of the conventional level. Depending on such skillful means it is possible to bring about the ultimate truth. So, ultimate truth is known as that which is born from skillful means. Indeed, the ultimate and the conventional are mutually dependent. It does not follow that one realizes emptiness only when appearances are eliminated. Nor does it follow that one obtains appearances only when emptiness is eliminated. Emptiness and appearances are neither separate nor combined. As it is said in the *Heart Sutra*, “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form.”

Direct perception and inference have never gone beyond the state that is free from all conceptual elaborations. Their nature is none other than emptiness, but, in terms of appearance, direct perception and inference do exist, and so we can employ them as valid knowledge. There are two types of valid knowledge: one is valid knowledge of minds and the other is the knowledge of the valid person, who is referred to as our fundamental teacher Buddha Shakyamuni, for he is the only incomparably correct and great person.

When examined with a valid knowledge of the ultimate, all things are entirely beyond conceptual elaboration, absolutely lacking any solid existence that can be attached to or cling to. However, sentient beings persistently attach themselves to appearances, therefore they incessantly wander in samsara. In the Chinese term “think” (*xiang*), the syllable is made of the radical portraying “mind” below, and the radical meaning “appearance” above. What this means is that the mind is constantly attached to appearance; due to this attachment, all thoughts, as well as doctrinal traditions, are then generated, and perpetually recurring. It thus becomes extremely difficult for sentient beings to attain liberation from samsara. Therefore, buddhas and

bodhisattvas compassionately warn us: “It is necessary to understand all appearances on a conventional level, to discern deluded appearances from real appearances, without confusing one thing for the other.” Today, some people lack the slightest understanding of how to follow a Buddhist teacher, remaining in confusion all the time. When they eventually use up their money and energy, they are overcome with regrets. This is because they cannot clearly distinguish between the authentic and inauthentic Dharma.

On an ultimate level, the categories of true and false merge entirely into the realm of Dharmadhatu, just like hundreds of rivers ultimately converging into a single ocean. But in any event, we ordinary beings have not yet come to this realization, therefore we must clearly distinguish between true and false, and between valid and invalid knowledge.

Doubts: Is It Necessary to Make Analysis on Valid Knowledge?

K3: Is It Necessary to Make Analysis on Valid Knowledge?

[VERSES 53~54]

***“Without analysis of valid and invalid knowledge,
But relying only on that which is seen by an ordinary person,
One can enter into ultimate truth.” One may say.
Although this is not to be refuted,
Seeing that this produces that result
Is the direct perception of the world,
And inference occurs in reliance upon it.
They are not named, but their meaning is never abandoned.***

Some might think that it is not necessary to engage analysis of invalid knowledge, for example, perceiving two moons or yellow sea conch, and of valid knowledge, for example, perceiving a white conch or a single moon. Instead, it's better to behave like the Consequentialists simply setting forth arguments in the same manner as the ordinary people do. As Chandrakirti said in his *Introduction to the Middle Way*, “We speak in harmony with worldly folk and grant that things exist, though they do not.” So one can enter ultimate truth just by relying on however the worldly people posit their arguments, and it is not necessary to make too many distinctions.

Some practitioners also engage the following thought: “What purpose is there in studying Buddhist Logic and the Middle Way? We only need to realize ultimate truth, and to attain awakening. There is not much knowledge one should feel compelled to acquire beyond this.”

Certainly, we do not completely disagree with this assertion. There were rare cases where someone directly entered ultimate truth without engaging in valid and invalid knowledge. Take, for example, the Sixth Patriarch Huineng in the Zen tradition, or a few accomplished masters in the Tibetan tradition. They never learned or reflected on the analysis of valid and invalid knowledge. And yet, after receiving sublime instructions from their teachers, they were suddenly awakened, thereby attaining the realization of the ultimate. On a similar account, some Consequentialists with uncommon faculties do not require long periods of reflection, and can directly enter into the ultimate truth that is beyond all conceptual elaborations. We do have such cases.

While we do not refute such assertion, ordinary people also agree with direct perception and inference, as well as valid and invalid knowledge. When common people see the relation like “this produces this result; that produces that result”, they see by means of direct perception. Moreover, when they employ reasoning relying on direct perception to obtain a final conclusion, what they engage in is inference. Therefore, although they do not have the names of direct perception and inference, they never abandon the meanings of these terms.

For example, a farmer does not know what is called direct perception, or what is called inference. But he has seen with his own eyes that, if he plants barley seeds, barley shoots will sprout. We might then tell him that this is called direct perception. In spring, as he plants seeds, the farmer knows that if no special calamity takes place, when fall arrives he will certainly reap crops. We can then tell him that this is what we call inference. The farmer also knows that it is impossible to sow barley and then harvest wheat or rice. Again, we might tell him that this would be called an invalid reasoning. Therefore, our lesson in Buddhist Logic to the farmer is not that difficult.

Likewise, in the summer months, herdsmen are busy with milking cows and making ghee. They know that by fall they will have bags of milk curd and blocks of ghee.

Moreover, the men who are now building the monastic hall for us are so determined that many of them even work at night, since they know, too, that after some time they will earn money from us.

Clearly, the people of the world such as farmers, herdsman, and workers know what is logical and what is illogical, and, in regard to what is logical, they also know what they see with their own eyes, and what they conclude through inference. Although professors, scientists, or literary scholars might not know Buddhist technical terminology, in their essays and works they also have things they infer or see directly. Hence, there are different ways of calling direct perception and inference. Therefore, it is an unreasonable assertion that the analysis of valid and invalid knowledge is unnecessary.

Question on the Valid Knowledge of the Conventional

J2: Specific Explanation

K1: Question on the Valid Knowledge of the Conventional

[VERSE 55]

If the valid knowledge of the conventional were not twofold,

Pure vision would become false.

Thus with worldly vision, as for the sea conch,

It would not follow that white is its true color and yellow is false.

If our opponent were to assert that the analysis of valid and invalid knowledge is acceptable, and yet, that the division of the valid knowledge of the conventional into that of pure vision and that of worldly vision is illogical and unnecessary. Let us negate the assertion as follows, illustrating that we would incur into a great fallacy if we do not divide valid knowledge of the conventional into these two kinds.

The first fallacy is that “pure vision would become false”. As mentioned above, after buddhas and bodhisattvas enter the concentration of fundamental wisdom, the valid knowledge of pure vision that they acquire clearly sees the myriads of knowable objects. As it is said in the *Abhidharmakosa*, with mental engagement, hearers see one million worlds, solitary buddhas see one billion worlds, and buddhas see countless worlds; without mental engagement, they respectively see one thousand, one million, and one billion worlds. The countless beings and worlds seen by hearers can all be perfectly seen by buddhas in a spot of the dimension of a single wheel. Of the pure appearances that tantric yogins see, the four elements are female buddhas. As human beings see a bowl of water, the gods see the nectar of immortality in the same bowl,

so the higher the state one attains, the purer is what one sees. Common beings are unable to see a single valley, let alone thousands of worlds. People like me cannot even see all the people in a tiny monastery hall. I can only see the people sitting in the front, not knowing who are sitting in the back.

However, without a valid knowledge of pure vision, what is seen by a common being would be the same as what is seen by an enlightened being. But this is illogical. If what we see now were entirely correct, the path of the noble ones would become useless. Buddhist scriptures say this very clearly, “Eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, are not valid types of knowledge. If they were valid, what would be the purpose of the path of the noble ones?” The implication is that, if sensory faculties were valid forms of knowledge, what we see would be entirely correct, therefore, what would be the advantage of the path of the noble persons? There would be absolutely no advantage.

The pure appearances seen by a noble person endowed with supernatural powers such as the Buddha are boundless and immeasurable. Once, the god Brahma Sikkhin came to Buddha Shakyamuni’s world, and engaged in a debate with Shariputra. The god described the world of Buddha Shakyamuni as majestic and glorious, entirely pure, and absolutely not the rough and impure world seen by common beings. As the debate ensued, the Buddha said, “My world is fundamentally of just such majesty and purity, but other beings cannot see it the way it is.”

Therefore, the real aspect of our world is entirely pure, but the eyes, ears, noses, and tongues of common beings are completely unable to see this pure aspect. Hence, with no valid knowledge of pure vision, what the noble ones see would entirely turn into falsity, just like the yellow conch seen by a person whose eyes are affected by cataracts.

The second fallacy is that an ordinary being’s valid knowledge of worldly vision should not be analyzed as true and false. The white conch appearing to a person affected by cataracts as yellow is false. The white conch appearing to a person not

affected by cataracts as white is true. Moreover, the single moon appearing in the sky to a person whose eyes are not damaged by illness, is true, while a double moon is a mistaken appearance. Furthermore, to see a patterned rope toward sunset, and regard it as a venomous snake, is false, while on the other hand to regard it as a rope is correct. If we do not distinguish valid knowledge between worldly vision and pure vision on a conventional level, then, in the confusion of valid knowledge of worldly vision, it becomes entirely impossible to distinguish between false and true. When we take water for water, on a conventional level this is correct, but when we take a mirage for water, this is incorrect. Similarly, when we go to the market to buy goods, some objects are fake, while some others are genuine. Therefore, we must understand that on a conventional level we need to apply this kind of analysis.

This is Mipham Rinpoche's special instruction. In Tibet, other Buddhist traditions do not engage analysis about the conventional truth in the same manner. If so, however, how to categorize the pure appearances seen by the noble ones? It does not belong to ultimate truth, neither does it belong to conventional truth because conventional truth is entirely false. Some people ask the following question: "If conventional appearances are entirely false, and the ultimate is entirely emptiness, then how about a Pure Land? Is it also false?" We can respond in the following way: "From the perspective of a valid knowledge of the conventional, a Pure Land is a true aspect, for it is an object of the valid knowledge of pure vision."

Therefore, there must be a distinction, for without it, many would eventually become lost in regard to these questions. Today, in Tibetan Buddhism, some commentators do not make a distinction between valid knowledge of pure vision and of worldly vision. Therefore, when they come to establish the two truths, they become confused. In Buddhism of Han traditions, one must also understand that on a conventional level there exists this mode of analysis. In this way, it is quite simple to answer questions such as, on a conventional level, how to establish the Pure Land, how

to establish the impure Saha world, and how to analyze them on an ultimate level. We must ponder these questions with great care.

Question on the Valid Knowledge of the Ultimate

K2: Question on the Valid Knowledge of the Ultimate

[VERSE 56]

If there were not two types of valid knowledge of the ultimate,

The inseparability of the two truths would not be known,

And the ultimate would fall into conceptual extremes,

Causing its very own destruction.

Some individuals regard this twofold distinction of the conventional truth as barely plausible. Yet, after all, is not the ultimate truth the realm of reality, which is an inseparable single entity? So, how can the realm of reality split into two? Wouldn't it be better if the valid knowledge of the ultimate were not divided into two kinds? Indeed, such thought is illogical.

Like the valid knowledge of the conventional splitting into two kinds, the ultimate must also split into two kinds: the one is the provisional mere emptiness, that is, the seemingly real ultimate; and the other is the ultimate reality that is beyond all conceptual elaborations, that is, the real ultimate. Thus the valid knowledge or the wisdom that observes the ultimate, also splits into two kinds. Lacking such twofold distinction, it would be impossible to know how ultimate and conventional truths are inseparably in a perfect union.

We know that all things are appearances, and that appearances are emptiness. In other words, appearances are ascertained to be so-called "emptiness". Appearances and emptiness are non-dual and indivisible. Emptiness is appearances, and appearances are emptiness. This state is called the "indivisible union of appearances and emptiness". The union of appearances and emptiness is not established in a

conceptual mind or in language, but has completely gone beyond the realm of thought and language, and so is called “beyond conceptual elaborations”. The entities of all things, which are beyond conceptual elaboration, are non-dual and indivisible, and this is called “equality”. In this way, as one gradually moves further according to the four steps of the Middle Way, i.e., emptiness, union of appearances and emptiness, being beyond conceptual elaborations, and equality, one finally understands the real meaning of ultimate truth.

If what we call the ultimate truth were simply established on the level of mere emptiness, then how would mere emptiness merge with appearances? Supposing that the merging of the two became the union of appearances and emptiness, then, as Mipham Rinpoche once said, this kind of union could be comparable to two hemp ropes, one white and one black, twisted together. As a result, it would be absolutely impossible to establish the indivisibility of appearances and emptiness. Eventually, the ultimate truth would fall into either the extreme of eternalism or the extreme of nihilism, either the extreme of existence or the extreme of nonexistence. It can go nowhere other than these extremes. However, this is certainly not what all buddhas and bodhisattvas ultimately intended.

In *The Ornament of the Middle Way* it is said:

Production and the rest have no reality,

Thus nonproduction and the rest are equally impossible.

The implication is that, when analyzed through the reasoning of neither one nor many, there are absolutely no such things as production, abiding, and cessation. Since there is no production, its counterpart of non-production also does not exist, and the same is true for non-abiding and non-cessation. So, if production, abiding, and cessation do not exist, then the mere emptiness of production, abiding, and cessation, also does not exist. Hence, they must be all beyond conceptual elaborations, apart from which, there is no other way of ascertaining them.

Therefore, if mere emptiness is the ultimate truth, its entity would be destroyed naturally. Put another way, if the entity of ultimate truth were in the domain of language or thought, such as mere emptiness, it would not be the real ultimate truth, for it only causes its own destruction. Hence, we should know that, just as what Mipham Rinpoche says, in order to grasp ultimate truth, we must accept a provisional view of mere emptiness, and furthermore, we must understand the great emptiness that is beyond all conceptual elaborations. In sum, we must assert these two types of emptiness.

In Tibet, a few masters believed that the emptiness taught by Buddha Shakyamuni was mere emptiness, such as the absence of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. Some masters from different regions, both in the past and today, also put forth this kind of assertion. But, if such awakening were the genuine great awakening, awakening would be too easy. Even a kindergarten kid when looking at an empty bowl, immediately knows that the bowl is empty. The *Beacon of Certainty* also contains a detailed analysis of this topic. We must know that not seeing anything with our eyes is only a mere emptiness, and this type of emptiness is a provisional emptiness. The true and ultimate emptiness must be beyond all elaborations, which is the emptiness ascertained by Nagarjuna in *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*. When realizing this type of emptiness, all conceptual elaborations will entirely dissolve into the realm of reality. Therefore, we must posit these two levels of the ultimate.

Conclusion

K3: Conclusion

[VERSE 57~58]

The conventional, that which is examined, is nonexistent;

So too the examining mind and self-awareness.

Upon analysis, they turn out nonexistent, like the moon in water.

Ultimately, this is the one single indivisible truth,

Which is also nirvana, and the true reality.

Because it is the ultimate reality of all things,

Once the subjects and their objects dissolve into an inseparable single body,

It gives rise to the enlightened wisdom that is beyond the middle and the extremes.

When ascertained through reasoning concerning the ultimate, all things, regardless of whether they belong to conventional or ultimate truths, are absolutely nonexistent. If what is under examination is nonexistent, then, the examining mind, including the seven consciousnesses together with self-awareness, is also nonexistent, just like the moon reflected onto the waters of a lake. *The King of Samadhi Sutra* contains an excellent metaphor: “The moon in an autumn night, appears on a pure and clear river. The moon in water is empty and nothing of it can be grasped; contemplate all things in the same way.” At night, the bright moon appears on the water. Although its appearance is there, nothing exists there of its substance. We should contemplate all things in a similar way.

In *The King of Samadhi Sutra*, there are many such descriptions of contemplating how all things do not possess a real nature, like the moon reflection. On a similar account, the *Treatise on Finding Comfort and Ease in the Nature of Mind* also employs

the metaphor of the moon reflection to illustrate how the entity of all things lacks a real and solid existence, and explains the conventional and the ultimate truths in a clear way.

When analyzed through the reasoning of the ultimate, all things are found to lack their own nature. Then in the end, ultimate and conventional truths, together with all objects and subjects, are non-dual and indivisible, and of a single entity. In the *Sixty Stanzas on Correct Reasoning*, Nagarjuna said, “Nirvana is the only one truth, as proclaimed by all buddhas.” It means that nirvana is the only ultimate truth, and nothing exists other than the ultimate truth. Although, in terms of appearance, all buddhas taught many such truths as the two truths and the Four Noble Truths, in true reality there is only one truth, nirvana. In the *Jewel Heap Sutra*, the Buddha also said that ultimate truth is the only one truth, and that it is non-deceiving, and it is nirvana.

Here nirvana refers to the ultimate reality of all things. It does not mean that the Buddha’s or the master’s manifestation of nirvana is the ultimate truth. Here, the ultimate truth is called nirvana, and it can be also called the true reality, the great ultimate, the great emptiness, the great state beyond conceptual elaboration, the great perfection, the great Middle Way, etc.

Because it is the ultimate reality of all things, once we have reached the realm where the knowing subjects and the known objects are entirely non-dual and of a single taste, we will have reached the highest realm. The body in which subjects and objects are non-dual is the wisdom body, which transcends all speeches and distinctions such as the middle and the extremes.

Many individuals cling with strong habitual tendencies to conventional truth. Although they might be good at handling worldly matters, they are not at all familiar with ultimate truth. Indeed, in order to achieve Buddhahood, we must thoroughly understand the perfection of wisdom and emptiness, which is the ultimate meaning of Buddha Shakyamuni’s teachings. In the *Prajnaparamita Sutra in One Hundred*

Thousand Verses, it is said: “Just like all rivers merge into the Ganges River and then into the ocean, all five paramitas are led by *prajnaparamita*, and then one finally reaches the resultant state of the all-knowing wisdom.” It points out the importance of the teachings of the perfection of wisdom.

Today, some people in the world believe that listening and reflection are not useful, and practice is sufficient. Many virtuous masters regard this as a type of harmful obstruction caused by Mara, for the Buddha’s genuine teachings and realizations are all built on the very foundation of listening and reflection. We must thus observe pure precepts and study with diligence, making an effort to listen and reflect about the Buddha’s teachings. In order to engage in listening and reflection, one must possess the three indispensable elements, which are confidence, renunciation, and bodhicitta. With these three elements, the Buddha’s teaching will certainly merge into one’s mind and lead one to enlightenment. With no confidence, renunciation and bodhicitta, even though one seemingly engages practices, spending the entire day absorbed in meditation, these practices will not become a genuine cause for liberation.

Sometimes I think that worldly things such as wealth and reputation are not enviable things. In contrast, I cherish from the depth of my heart a genuine admiration for true practitioners who are content with few desires and observe pure precepts. The teachings of the Kadampa, Sakya, and Nyingma traditions all hold that, only if a practitioner is not attached to the present life, and his or her actions are not for the sake of personal reputation and happiness, but for the sake of future lives and other sentient beings, he or she is a genuine practitioner.

Human life is truly short. Some individuals can live into their seventies or eighties. Others might live into their thirties or forties. The human body is like a fresh flower in the fall season. It is very hard to say when one will be hit by impermanence that arrives like a killing frost. Therefore, in this short human life, as long as we have years to live, we should make a good use of the teachings that we have learned. But how do we

make use of them? At all times, quietly address prayers to buddhas and bodhisattvas, and get rid of the afflictions in our mental continuum to the best of our abilities. If we cannot do so, we should also suppress afflictions as much as we can. A genuine practitioner is someone who makes his or her efforts in this direction. In sum, everyone should cherish our meeting with the sublime sutrayana and tantrayana teachings, and put them into daily practice.

In the present age, some people rush around for fame, others for wealth, and others blindly waste their entire lives. Although I have not attained a particularly high realm of realization, as I went for refuge to my master, I always listened and reflected, and placed my entire time and energy into the Buddhadharma. Now, even if I died tomorrow, I would have no regrets, and I regard my human lifetime as a fortunate one, because in such hard times, I can still employ many years of my life in listening and reflection. So I sincerely believe my lifetime is worthwhile and meaningful.