

Chapter Five. The Four Reliances

General Explanation of the Four Reliances

E2: The Four Reliances: The Function of the Four Principles

F1: General Explanation

[VERSES 59~60]

***Through these profound and vast teachings,
Once the eyes of wisdom have opened,
One sees the noble path travelled by
The bliss-gone buddhas and their heirs,
As well as those enlightened beings of great wisdom.
This is the way of the sutra and tantra vehicles,
So difficult to find. Whoever has obtained them,
Should never let them pass in vain, fruitlessly.***

In the history of Mahayana Buddhism, Nagarjuna and Asanga, as prophesied by Buddha Shakyamuni himself, founded respectively the Madhyamaka (profound) and the Yogacara (vast) traditions. These two traditions encompassed the eighty-four thousand teachings imparted by Buddha Shakyamuni, and together represent the most supreme system in the Mahayana. Combining the Yogacara and Madhyamaka traditions will therefore further improve our listening, reflection, and meditation.

Without listening and reflection, Madhyamaka and Yogacara will remain a closed book. It is troubling that many people today who do not have any understanding of the Buddhadharma often deliberately slander and misinterpret it. It is therefore

necessary to devote time to research, analyze, and explore the Buddha's most sublime teachings in order to understand them.

If we engage reflection on these profound and vast teachings, we will open our wisdom eyes and see the sublime path that buddhas and bodhisattvas have travelled. The noble Buddha Shakyamuni, leading the buddhas of the ten directions and the three realms, and Manjushri and Maitreya, leading the great bodhisattvas, as well as the six ornaments and the two great sublime ones of India, Nagarjuna and Asanga as foremost among them, provided the instructions that revealed the sublime path they traveled. This path is the vehicle of bliss and the entrance into bliss. In other words, both of its foundation and result are blissful, so it is a path of bliss, a path that no one should ever abandon.

This sublime path consists of the two traditions of the profound and of the vast in the sutra traditions, and of all the instructions contained in the inner and outer tantra traditions. The essence of the Buddha's teachings is solely encompassed by these two traditions. Therefore, we must have faith and diligently apply ourselves in learning these teachings. If not so, given our weakening human faculties and wisdom in the present age of degeneration, it will be near impossible for us to gain understanding and to become awakened.

It is extremely fortunate that we have the sublime, essential teachings of the sutras. Yet it is even more rare that we have the tantras, that we have been initiated by qualified masters, and that thanks to the essential instructions of our masters, we are able to get to know the nature of our minds. In particular, in the Great Perfection, we can receive the Precious Word Empowerment, in which one relies upon the master's figurative explanations to recognize the natural luminosity of one's mind. These too, are especially precious and rare instructions. Therefore, if you get the opportunity to obtain them, you must not neglect them and let them pass in vain, fruitlessly.

In my recent retreat, as I looked through such texts as the *Lama Yangtik*, *Seven Treasuries*, the *Extensive Biography of Buddha Shakyamuni*, and *The Ornament of the Middle Way*, a sincere and strong gratitude for His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche rose deep in my heart. During those years, His Holiness bestowed upon us so many instructions, and each of these instructions was more sublime than the other. Today, although I have not yet assimilated most of these instructions, I believe the fact that I have encountered them is already quite extraordinary.

Not only have we met these essential Buddhadharma, which is like a wish-fulfilling gem and manifests as rarely as the udumbara flower, we have also met the sublime teacher, and we have placed our faith on him. Although some of us may possess the causes and conditions to become ordained while others may not possess the same, we can endeavor to listen, reflect, and meditate. In truth, if one has the opportunity to engage in these activities, it is because of one's excellent roots of virtue and also as a reward for having performed virtuous deeds in the past. Therefore one should feel greatly honored. On the contrary, if one has not accumulated virtuous deeds and has no roots of virtue, it will be extremely difficult to encounter the essential teachings.

Especially today, in this age of degeneration, and in an increasingly complex, confused, and ignorant environment, the erroneous views of the myriads of sentient beings pervade the entire world. Not only are the genuine doctrines of sutra and tantra, the traditional paths of China's Confucius and Mencius are also emphasized by less and less people. Those who can learn these universal paths are increasingly rare. Instead, more and more are exposed to the trash cultures from the East and the West. These individuals, who lack the most basic human principles for living in this world, are becoming more numerous each day.

But we are extremely fortunate to have obtained the essential teachings of sutra and tantra. This is not something that has occurred for no reason, or with no difficulty.

This kind of opportunity is truly rare. If one lets go of it, it may never return. Therefore, no one should let these teachings go by in vain. As Mipham Rinpoche has said above, “Whoever has obtained them, should never let them pass in vain, fruitlessly.” If none of us can enjoy the fine taste of the nectar of the Buddha’s teaching, and just randomly passes away this life, that would truly be a pity. Hence, once you have met the sublime dharma, you must never let it go. You must not squander your days and spend all of your time doing things that are not meaningful.

The mental dispositions for sentient beings are varied. The less fortunate beings are not inclined to learn what they should learn, such as the profound Buddhadharma. On the contrary, they show great zest for worldly things which they should not learn, such as much of the nonsense found on the Internet. This is indeed a manifestation of the power of previous deeds. In the past, Jigme Lingpa vividly described the circumstances of practice of wicked individuals. In the first stage, these individuals would be akin to wild oxen for they are utterly unable to become inclined to the genuine teaching of the Buddha. In the second stage, they harbor negative feelings toward listening and reflection, show disinterest, are restless at all times, and run around in the pursuit of worldly things. At the end, these individuals come to lead a deviant lifestyle. Or they were once practitioners and later became non-practitioners. These individuals are like men lost in a forest who would later find themselves in very unfavorable situations.

Today, numerous people in the world hold erroneous views and knowledge. On the surface, they may appear to have a certain level of education, such as university students, and yet, they are particularly skilled in performing unwholesome deeds, with absolutely no interest in performing the slightest wholesome deed. These people are all around us and are very numerous. We absolutely must not become like them!

Sometimes I engage the following thought: “Since at present I have already taken

refuge, and I have a genuine faith in the Buddhadharma, even if I died now I would have no regrets. But if on the other hand, I ultimately adopt a deviant lifestyle, wrong views, and if I ridicule the law of cause and effect. Then at the time of death I would have many regrets. So in the latter case, I would rather die early.” Hence, when we meet with difficulties of different kinds, we must never forsake our wish-fulfilling gem of Buddhadharma. This is a pledge everyone should cherish in their innermost being. Indeed, the strength of such a pledge can be a very powerful tool to protect our spiritual practice.

As for our daily practice, we should join palms together before all buddhas and bodhisattvas, and wish for awakening. Often we may be among other people and there might be some distractions, however, when our minds have become quiet, either in the morning we rise or at night when we fall asleep, we should pray in silence: “Lifetime after lifetime, may I not become separate from the teacher and the Three Jewels. Lifetime after lifetime, may I not become separate from the mind of renunciation, from the aspiration of bodhichitta, and from the sublime realization of the unsurpassed Great Perfection.” If we generate these aspirations at all times, if we pray in this manner, our minds will gradually transform, for the mind stream can ultimately be conditioned. Although, at first, the mind might be stubborn and unreceptive, it will gradually become calm and disciplined. Eventually, new realizations will also be manifested to the mind. Everyone is capable of this kind of development.

[VERSES 61~62]

Endowed with the four principles,

Possessing the brilliance of sublime intelligence,

And the wisdom of not being changed by others,

The four reliances will definitely arise.

Without such intelligence,

***One is like a blind following another blind person
Just relies on fame, mere words, and what is easy to understood,
And goes against the logic of the four reliances.***

The fine taste of the Buddhadharma is extremely rare. Without the certainty of principle and intelligence, it is perhaps impossible to enjoy this fine taste. For example, although the world may be full of riches, people with less merits may find it difficult to gain wealth. So, how does one genuinely enjoy the fine taste of the Buddhadharma? We must possess the aforementioned four principles: (1) the principle of function, (2) the principle of dependence, (3) the principle of nature, and (4) the principle of establishment by proof. When we engage analysis through these four principles, we will certainly achieve an understanding of the conventional and the ultimate truth. In other words, by way of these four principles we must augment our own continuum, and become endowed with the brilliance of the intelligence that understands the conventional and the ultimate truth.

With insufficient intelligence, it would be difficult even to effectively engage in the practices concerning the rarity of human existence and the impermanence of life. Today, many people do not listen and reflect, and as a result, they do not understand the real meaning of the Buddha's teaching. All they do is to give offerings to the Buddha and perform prostrations before the Buddha in monasteries. Of course there is no doubt that these are meritorious and empowering activities, however, it is essential that one must generate from the depth of one's heart the certainty that "The Buddhadharma is truly amazing!" This, I am afraid, is still a rarely seen certainty in many people. Even more difficult to understand is the observation that among many who have already been ordained or have received the precepts of the layperson for years, there is still little understanding of the basic principles of the Buddhadharma, spending much of their days performing unwholesome deeds.

Through the application of the four principles, our mental continuum will be entirely guided by the wisdom of the Buddhadharma such that we can confront any external conditions without being affected. In Mipham Rinpoche's *Commentary on The Ornament of the Middle Way*, this condition is called "not being changed by others", which means in meeting with any adverse conditions, our wisdom will be unshakeable. It is true that even if we listen and reflect for a long time, we may still not attain a high state such as the divine eye, but we will not be affected by ordinary adverse conditions or external circumstances.

In a trip home not long after I came to Larung Gar, one of my friends, who is a government official, engaged in a debate with me for an entire evening. He did not accept the Buddhadharma. He said, "Chairman Mao is right, Buddhism is false, faith does not exist, and the same is true for the law of cause and effect." Although, at that time, I did not spend much time on listening and reflection, I had become familiar with the principles of Buddhist Logic and the Middle Way, so I was entirely capable of debating with him. However, he became angry at me, and kept saying, "This is absolutely not so, it is absolutely false." Still, he could utter no logical statement beyond this. We used to be very good friends in middle school, yet our views had become completely different. After this debate, I thought, "If I hadn't studied Buddhist Logic and the Middle Way, I might have been convinced by him to change my attitude on Buddhism." On the one hand, because we were good friends, it would have been easier to agree with his statements. On the other hand, his tone was also resolute in advancing his specious arguments that appeared to be very convincing and impressive.

Therefore, once we possess the four principles, we also possess the wisdom of not being easily changed by others. As a result, we will develop the sublime certainty concerning the four reliances.

The first is to rely not on the individual but rely on the teaching. Nowadays,

especially in large cities, while many people rely on others, few rely on the teaching. Imagine someone saying, “This is the so-and-so master, he’s a rotund, handsome man!” “It sounds as if he is a religious king!” or “It sounds as if he is the abbot!” “He is amazing because he comes from such-and-such monastery.” But this is only a question of fame. No one has checked whether this person concretely possesses the real qualities of a dharma teacher. If one relies on a master who has not attained a state that is encompassed in the genuine Buddhadharma, then this person does not rely on the teaching, but rely on this master himself.

Of all teachings, some focus on the linguistics while others are more focused on the meaning. We must not rely on the words, but rely on their meaning. In order to appeal to sentient beings, some teachings in the Buddhadharma have a poetic and dramatic nature. Yet it is not the words that are important, but their meaning. For example, when we take aspects such as the rarity of the human existence, the impermanence of life, renunciation, and bodhichitta, it is their meaning that matters the most.

In addition, meaning has two aspects: (1) definitive or ultimate meaning and (2) provisional meaning. Sentient beings have different predispositions. Therefore, the Buddha also provisionally taught teachings whose meaning is not ultimate and not final. But eventually we must choose the teachings of definitive meaning.

Among the teachings of definitive meaning, some belong to the domain of conceptual mind, while others belong to the domain of wisdom. The domain of conceptual mind, for example, pertains the certainty about the emptiness of all things that is obtained through learning and reflecting. The domain of wisdom however, is only the realm of buddhas and bodhisattvas, the non-dual reality of equality and purity that is beyond all conceptual elaborations. Given this two, we should rely on wisdom instead of the conceptual mind. After all, now we are still common beings, so we

cannot avoid relying on conceptual mind. But eventually we must opt for the domain of wisdom.

Such are the four reliances. If taken from a positive and negative perspective, the four reliances can be said to have four types of non-reliance and four types of reliance, with eight types in total. We must clearly understand their sequence and avoid confusion.

Thus, we must now seek to develop the brilliance of wisdom in our mental continuum by means of the four principles so that it will not be easily changed by others. At that time, we will also be able to gradually develop the four reliances. If we lack the wisdom to keep us from being easily changed by others, we will be in a dangerous situation. A blind person who has to rely on another blind person is very likely to fall off from a cliff. Sakya Pandita once said, “The wise observes by himself, while the fool follows the voice of others.” The fool has no principle of his own, but blindly runs around by merely following the statements of other people. Hence, if we do not possess the aforementioned four principles, we may just end up following the crowd.

One time when I visited Guangzhou, a lay practitioner told me the following: “We are lost as to what we must do. Some say that a certain master is excellent, but three days after we take refuge with him, many people begin saying that he is not that good, and that another master is excellent; then after only four days with this other master, someone else shows up and says that he is not that good, and that another would be a better choice. Now, we have no idea as to how to make a choice. Please, give me some advice.” Yet this kind of advice is difficult to give. If one had a little wisdom of one’s own, one could make a choice according to the related Dharma teachings, regardless of the positive or negative judgment of others.

Today, some people take refuge based merely on a master’s fame. This is an

example of over-reliance on a person instead of the teaching. Some may like ornate statements, others may like to listen to fine and pleasant songs, all the while completely neglecting to practice. This is an example of over-reliance on words and not relying on meaning.

Regarding meaning, provisional meaning is linked to the domain of conceptual mind, which is easy to understand, while definitive meaning is linked to the domain of wisdom, which is difficult to understand. Many people prefer what is easy to understand but fail to utilize the domain of wisdom nor definitive meaning. This is illogical and to continue in this way inverts the four reliances.

Despite the brevity of this text, with only about one hundred stanzas, the instructions contained therein are quite profound. I used to think, “If everyone receives this teaching, one would certainly obtain an immeasurable benefit.” Yet, simply put, the short explanations we give in class are certainly not sufficient. My hope is that you combine the textual outline, the verses, and the commentary together, and analyze the topics one by one: What are the ultimate truths? What are the conventional truths? How should the real and the false ultimate truths be analyzed? And how should the real and the false conventional truths be analyzed? What is the relation of one to the other? In so doing, step after step, our minds will be gradually inspired through wisdom. In the end, neither the worldly demons, nor the very heights of scientific thinking, will be able to take over our faith and wisdom. In this manner, our faith and wisdom will be firm and solid. As we keep practicing with this foundation, we will have understood the profound meaning of the Buddhadharma. Alternatively, if we engage learning only on the surface, we will certainly not gain much insight. For this reason, everyone should diligently study this sublime treatise.

I have always believed that human life is indeed precious, and that we are extremely fortunate to have met this sublime and definitive teaching revealed by a

genuine wisdom, and for being able to put it into practice. This is our greatest blessing. We should not miss this superb opportunity, and each of us should be ever mindful about it. We must conscientiously care for our present and future lives, and be conscious of the happiness and the suffering of all sentient beings. In this manner, we will succeed in our practice. Otherwise, although those who study are many, those who succeed are few. This is the reality in our age of degeneration.

Hence, we must always invoke the teacher and the Three Jewels, keeping their excellent teaching ever in our minds. The purpose of studying the teaching is to leave samsara and to benefit sentient beings. We must not depart from these two key objectives. In this way, our practice will acquire true meaning. No matter if you remain in this world for one year, or even for a single day, your practice will certainly have value. Indeed, having your three daily meals should not be all you think about. You must think about how to benefit sentient beings, and how to accomplish your practice in this very lifetime. You should pray from the bottom of your hearts to obtain this!

Rely on the Teaching, not the Individual

F2: The Detailed Explanation

G1: Rely on the Teaching, not the Individual

[VERSE 63]

Therefore, do not rely on individuals,

But rely on the genuine Dharma.

It is through the path that can be established by reasoning,

That liberation occurs, not through the person who teaches it.

As Buddha Shakyamuni elucidated in many sutras, we should rely on the Dharma teaching but not rely on individuals. This is a point that we must put into practice, especially in this modern age. The consequences of not relying on the teaching are rather serious. Why? In this Saha world, Buddha Shakyamuni expounded all kinds of sublime teachings, and each of them can lead sentient beings to the sublime path for liberation. It would be impossible if one wishes to obtain liberation by solely relying on one's zeal, one's power, or one's compassion without the teachings. Certainly, in the history of the Chan or Vajrayana tradition, very few individuals who are endowed with matured capacities and a sublime accumulation of merits from previous lives have attained awakening as a result of certain actions from their masters. But such expression was also an expedient teaching. Indeed, there is no other method to obtain liberation besides the Dharma teaching. Therefore, those who aspire to liberation must rely upon the authentic Dharma proclaimed by the Buddha, or the sublime teaching taught by lineage masters through the generations.

As the Buddha said, "I showed you the path of liberation, but in order to achieve liberation you must rely upon your own practice." It means that the Buddha can only

teach us the sublime Dharma leading to liberation by turning the threefold wheel of the Dharma teachings, or by proclaiming the eighty-four thousand teachings, however, whether you will be able to attain liberation depends on yourself, and the Buddha has no other method aside from his teaching.

The Buddha also said,

*Sages do not wash away sins with water,
They do not clear away beings' suffering with their hands,
They do not transfer their own knowledge to others;
They liberate others only by teaching the truth of reality.*

The implication here is that none of the buddhas of the three times would be able to wash away the karma of living beings with water. It is also impossible for buddhas to remove the suffering of living beings with their compassionate hands. Furthermore, although the Buddha possesses states of immeasurable realization, he remains unable to transfer directly such states to common beings. What then, is the single method by which the Buddha leads us to liberation? It is his proclamation of the Buddhadharma.

In Patrul Rinpoche's *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, it is also said that no master can send a disciple to a pure land as if he were tossing a rock. The teacher shows his disciples the correct path by means of his compassionate mind. In turn, his disciples practice with diligence, and eventually will attain liberation. Therefore, it is said here that as we progress in our spiritual paths, we must not rely on someone only because of things such as his or her fame, property, and physical aspect.

In this age of degeneration, many individuals do not rely on the teaching but on the person. The consequences of such reliance is grave. These individuals never ponder whether someone can teach the Dharma. All they care about is who endorses this person, how awesome this person is, and so on. Here the verse emphasizes that only the sublime Dharma, which does not contradict Buddhist scriptures and reasoning, is

the staircase toward liberation and is the only method leading to freedom. We cannot attain liberation by solely depending on any person.

Buddha Shakyamuni never said, “Follow me every day, infuse tea and make food for me, and I will make sure you attain liberation.” The Buddha did not pronounce these words. Yet today, in Tibetan Buddhism, there are certain masters who do not pass a single word of teaching on to their disciples. At times, as their disciples learn the Dharma, these individuals even act against the interest of their disciples, occupying their days by making them perform tasks on their behalf. In the end, are these masters beneficial or harmful to their disciples? I feel great sadness in my depth of my heart when I witness this kind of actions.

Similar incidences also occurred to accomplished masters in the past, such as when Milarepa became the disciple of Marpa. Yet, Marpa proclaimed his unsurpassed, sublime teaching right after Milarepa cleared the obstructions of his past negative deeds, eventually helping Milarepa to obtain liberation. For all of us ordinary beings, it is extremely difficult to obtain liberation before our masters provide their teaching.

Yet, many lay practitioners who live in large cities, together with some practitioners in our own institution, are still unable to grasp this point. They believe that their master is an extraordinary individual, and that this belief alone would be sufficient to lead them to liberation. Certainly, it is a good thing to have faith and to revere one’s master and this is repeatedly emphasized in the scriptures of sutrayana and tantrayana. But why should a teacher be revered in this way? It is because a teacher speaks the sublime Dharma for liberation. Hence, when we rely on a teacher our only goal must be to obtain good teachings.

In the scriptures on this topic, the Buddha also said, “In order to make pure gold, gold must go through sixteen steps of refinement, including cutting and burning. Hence before you accept my teachings, carefully observe my teaching in like manner.

You must not respect me and receive all my teachings only because I am the Buddha.” Clearly, the Buddha never said that we can succeed only by paying homage to the Buddha, let alone than by paying homage to ordinary beings.

Some masters may encounter obstacles due to language barriers. As a result, they might ask their disciples to perform the fire offering or other rituals on a daily basis. Certainly, the fire offering is acceptable as a virtuous activity through which we perform generosity to ghosts and spirits, and yet no one said that it is possible to become accomplished by performing the fire offering only. If you spend your entire time practicing generosity, can you then obtain liberation? Indeed, the Buddha never pronounced these words. The single cause leading one to liberation is one’s own understanding of the Dharma, and further recognizing the fundamental nature of the mind, only then will one attain liberation.

Our human existence is a rare privilege and we must make our short lives meaningful. Therefore, we should not err on solely relying on the teacher. We need to be cognizant in this regard.

[VERSE 64]

As long as one delivers an excellent speech,

It does not matter what the speaker looks like.

For example, the Buddha, in order to teach someone,

Manifested as a butcher and the like.

If the teaching spoken by someone does not contradict the Buddha’s true intention, if it does not contradict the way of “abandoning evil and practicing virtue” taught by the Buddha in the twelve classes of scriptures, and if it does not contradict the principles and the underlying intention of the Mahayana, according to which all actions are for the benefit of living beings, then such a teaching is called “an excellent speech”. The language of the Buddha and of other great masters have the qualities of such

excellent speech. If someone can genuinely pronounce this excellent speech, his or her station in life is truly not important, whether he or she is a lay or an ordained person, or whether he or she is someone who have acted according to or against the law. To illustrate, in order to convert living beings, in some cases the Buddha had appeared as a butcher.

Jigme Lingpa once said that the Buddha appears to the beings of the six destinies with all different manifestations. For example, among birds he magically appears as a bird, and among water animals he also takes an aspect similar to theirs. As a result, we cannot fathom the countless aspects in which the Buddha manifests among beings. Manjushri also once manifested as the boar named “Daxi” in order to benefit living beings.

Mipham Rinpoche’s *Extensive Biography of Buddha Shakyamuni* contains many stories on this topic. For example, prior to awakening the Buddha was once born as King Brahmadatta. At one time, King Brahmadatta encountered a Pishacha, that is, a flesh-eating demon, who, manifesting in the sky, said to him: “In the presence of a past buddha, I once heard a Dharma teaching. If you are willing to listen, I can pass it on to you.” And so, Brahmadatta happily agreed to listen. But the Pishacha said: “I cannot pass the Dharma to you unconditionally. If you truly wish to obtain the sublime Dharma, you must comply with my request. If you make of your body, as well as the body of your wife and of your sons, a gift for me to eat, I will transmit the Dharma to you.” At that time, Brahmadatta held a sincere faith in the Dharma, so he thought, “No matter what, my body will be torn and bones crushed, so I would rather receive the sublime Dharma,” and responded accordingly. The Pishacha then spoke the following stanza in four verses:

*If you wish happiness for yourself and for others,
Refrain from performing all non-virtuous deeds.*

*The common and fool beings delight in non-virtue,
Hence they will suffer in the present life and in all lifetimes to come.*

King Brahmadata listened gladly to these verses, and prepared to give up his body with no regret. Perhaps, most people think of this stanza as an ordinary statement. Yet in earlier times, when His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche taught this biography, he said that prior to awakening the Buddha was willing to give up for this single stanza even his own blood and flesh, and he was prepared to sacrifice his own precious life for it. However, today in our age of degeneration, no one is willing to pay even a small price for even very profound Dharma. This is the dark aspect of our age.

Therefore, whoever listens to the Dharma must maintain a pure vision toward all dharma teachers who speak the Buddha's excellent teaching. This attitude is also very important in the context of Vajrayana.

In earlier times, among the great accomplished masters of India, there was an acharya named Buddhasrijnana. At one time, while on the road to Mount Wutai, he met a monk who had a household. This monk had a skirt tied to his waist, and a monk's robe wrapped around his head; he looked after an ugly wife; and he ploughed the soil in a field. After Buddhasrijnana witnessed the scene, he formed a negative impression of this monk. He came to believe that the monk's behavior was against the Dharma. But later, from the monk's bearing, and from his dialogue with his wife, Buddhasrijnana understood that the monk and his wife were engaging a particular behavior of Vajrayana. Buddhasrijnana then abandoned his negative impression and requested the monk to pass his teaching onto him. As the monk conferred the initiation upon Buddhasrijnana, the whole mandala of the deities appeared in front of him. Buddhasrijnana turned to the deities and expressed his wish to obtain the empowerment directly from them instead of the monk. But the deities turned into light and fused into the monk's body. Later, as Buddhasrijnana relied on the monk's

teachings and initiations, he achieved a definite level of accomplishment. Yet, due to his negative views at the outset of his encounter with the monk, along with the fact that he rejected the monk in front of the mandala, he was unable to attain the rainbow body in that very lifetime. But still, he obtained the transcendental accomplishment in his intermediate state.

The Mahasiddha Savaripa also used to take on the form of a hunter to benefit living beings. Some of his disciples attained the resultant state of Vajradhara in a single lifetime. And there was also Acharya Shantigupta, who once met six courtesans bathing by a river. As the women took shelter behind a wall while chatting, Shantigupta eavesdropped on their conversation. He thus found out that the women were exchanging secrets pertaining to the Vajrayana instructions. Only then did he know that the courtesans were magical transformations of dakinis. Later, he went into an inn, and the woman who sold wines and liquors there instantly transformed into Vajrayogini.

Many of the accomplished masters of India took on different appearances such the above. Some of them were butchers, while others were hunters. Therefore, if the Dharma spoken by someone perfectly agrees with the instructions taught by Buddha Shakyamuni, then it does not matter whether he or she is a layperson, or whether he or she is a butcher or a consort.

According to what is taught in the *Sutra on the Ten Wheels of Kshitigarbha*, even individuals who have broken their vows are allowed to teach, provided that they do so in perfect accordance with the sublime Dharma. As long as their teachings are beneficial to all living beings, their aspects need not necessarily and completely conform to the teaching.

We have some students here who spend their entire day pointing out the faults of their teachers: “This teacher doesn’t look too great.” “That teacher is a little chubby.”

While all teachers seem to have some faults, the conceptual minds of these students are misplaced. When they look at their teacher's faults, it is as if they had one thousand eyes. But when they look at their own faults, they do not seem to possess even a single eye. Certainly, for common beings it is extremely difficult to completely avoid looking at the faults of others. Indeed, if a teacher is able to explain to you a single sentence of the Dharma, his or her kindness would be hard to repay in the present life and in all lifetimes to come. As for me, even if I was taught the true meaning of a single stanza of four lines, regardless of how it was read and passed on to me, or whether it was explained in detail or not, I would hold these teachers as if they were truly inseparable from my own root guru my whole life. I have done so earlier in my life and it is now and will be in the future. I have gained only benefits in this way.

Therefore, regardless of the teacher who explains the Dharma to you, you should not overthink how this person is or is not. In contrast, what you must ponder is whether or not the Dharma that is spoken is the sublime teaching that was transmitted from Buddha Shakyamuni. This, to me, is what counts as the most valuable aspect.

For example, it is not very important whether a salesperson is good-looking. What matters is only what we buy from him or her. Acharya Aryadeva had only one eye. But he could clearly see the three realms in their entirety. Buton Rinchen Drub, the great master in the history of Tibetan Buddhism, also did not have a handsome appearance and yet his knowledge of the Buddhist canon was perfect. Therefore, the way one looks in the world is not so important. The most important thing is the teachings uttered by someone out of his or her compassion and wisdom. As long as his or her statements comply with the principle of bringing benefit to living beings, we should gladly accept them. Certainly, as a teacher, one should also display before others the manners of a teacher. One's behavior must be in harmony with the teachings. If not, in this age of degeneration, one would have difficulties in guiding living beings.

[VERSE 65]

***If the teachings contradict the doctrines of the Mahayana,
However virtuous the speaker may seem,
There will be no benefit,
Like a demon in the guise of the Buddha.***

As we know, Mahayana teachings encompass, from first to last, compassion and emptiness. In other words, the Mahayana practice, on an ultimate level, is to realize that all things are devoid of self-nature and are empty, and on a conventional level, is to engage in everything with the compassionate aspiration of Bodhichitta. If the teaching is completely incompatible with the mind of great compassion and with the ultimate truth of emptiness, even if a speaker appears to behave according to the teaching, to be virtuous and compassionate, we should not follow him or her. Again, suppose that a master were apparently engaging the twelve austerities, or that he or she appears to manifest the genuine aspect of a religious mentor, if what he or she says induces people to commit acts such as killing, stealing, lying or sexual misconduct, then he or she is someone we must avoid at all costs.

At times, the demon king Mara may take the aspect of the Buddha in order to preach his teaching. Yet, ultimately, as a demon, Mara is fundamentally unable to utter instructions on engaging the true Dharma. In *The Surangama Sutra*, it is said that a horde of demons may take the aspect of virtuous friends, in order to lead living beings to perform unwholesome deeds, to break the vows, to generate such delusions as ignorance and anger, and to behave against the principles of doctrine. The Buddha also prophesied that, in the age of degeneration, numerous wicked teachers would appear in this world, assuming all kinds of aspects to speak their dharma. Some would lure others by dressing in glamorous clothes, while others would pretend to be yogins by dressing in rags, and so on. When Lord Atisha came to Tibet, he was received by a number of monks wearing all kinds of clothes. He said that the demons of Tibet had

come to greet him.

Some individuals may at first glance appear to assume the aspect of religious mentors and their manners may seem to be in harmony with the teachings. However, on close analysis, their inner goal could be self-gratification and their teaching entirely against Buddhist scriptures, and their deeds would bring harm to living beings and to themselves. Hence, we must in no way believe in them or rely on them. If we do, we might find ourselves in great danger. In his *Treasury of Precious Qualities*, Jigme Lingpa brings forth the following metaphor. On a day when the weather is particularly hot, a venomous snake coils around the base of a tree. Then someone sits on the snake for the shade of the tree to cool off. As a result, the snake bites this person and he dies from the effects of poison. On a similar level, someone might mistake someone else for a compassionate mentor, following him or her in every way, and even offering to this person one's entire property. As a result, it becomes impossible for this person to turn back from this wrong path.

Hence, what we must rely on is the Buddhadharma taught by our fundamental teacher Buddha Shakyamuni. If someone possesses the precious Buddhadharma, we could then rely on him or her. The safest way is to not rely on any individual but instead rely on the teaching. If we rely instead on an individual, it is possible that under certain circumstances we may end up in a dangerous situation. We should therefore exercise care when faced with these issues.

Rely on the Meaning, not the Words

G2: Rely on the Meaning, not the Words

[VERSE 66]

In listening to the teachings and engaging in reflection,

Rely on the meaning rather than on words.

If the explained meaning is understood, it matters little

How eloquently or not the words were spoken.

As stated above, we must rely on the teaching. The teaching is consisted of the aspect of words and the aspect of meaning. Take the term “great compassion” for example. Its real meaning is the great compassion that arises in one’s mind towards all living beings. In English, the term consists of the two words “great compassion” while in Tibetan language there are also characters corresponding to this meaning. Some might think that the words themselves are the teaching and having heard the words, they become attached to them but do not seek to understand their real meaning. This is indeed unfortunate.

Therefore, after hearing such rare Buddhadharma from a dharma teacher, we should reflect deeply on its meaning. Regardless of how elegant the words might be, this is not crucial in terms of our liberation. As long as we can understand the expressed meaning, it matters little how eloquently or not the words were spoken. Any statement, more or less pleasing to the ear, is acceptable. Any expression, regardless of whether it is in Sichuanese, or Tibetan, or in Chinese languages, is entirely acceptable. If we are unable to grasp the meaning, then whether or not the sound of words is pleasant becomes irrelevant.

[VERSE 67]

***For meaning to be understood, with the intention to express it,
Names are given, and if one has already understood the meaning,
Yet engages in words and their conceptual elaborations,
It is as if one has found the elephant but is still looking for its footprints.***

In the beginning, people would give something a name because of their wish to make that object known to others and to convey their assessment of it. Later, people began to use this name to engaging in expressions and analysis. If, through such explanation, one can understand the real meaning of such an object, then it would not be important at all whether the words sounded good or bad. In the fifth chapter of the *Treasury of Valid Knowledge and Reasoning*, entitled *That which explains and that which is explained*, Sakya Pandita explains this topic in detail.

In the non-Buddhist tradition of Mimamsa, it is believed that the use of names depends on material forces. If this were the case, a good name will follow a good material force, and a mediocre name will follow a mediocre material force. Or put in another way, a beautiful person will have a fine name, and an ugly person will have a bad sounding name. Yet in reality, this does not always obtain. Hence, there is really no relationship between a name and a person or a thing.

Therefore, if we have already understood the meaning of a certain thing by means of a certain word, then we should not be concerned any further about the conceptual elaboration connected with that word, for we have already obtained what we need. For example, when we say, “the perfect union of appearance and emptiness”, if we have grasped the meaning of this statement, then any way of expression should be acceptable. In another example, when we say “the compassionate aspiration of bodhichitta”, it does not matter how we express this statement if you have grasped its content.

The goal of Buddha Shakyamuni's turning of the Dharma wheel is to lead living beings to understand his real intention. For this reason, the Buddha must provisionally rely on the conceptual elaboration of words. If you have already understood the meaning, do you then still need the words? Not in the slightest. If you still engage in the conceptual elaborations of words, then you are like someone who has lost an elephant and after the elephant has been found, is still making an effort to look for its footprints everywhere. Clearly, this is a rather unwise behavior and that person is really doing an entirely meaningless act.

[VERSE 68]

If one is attached to words, which become ever complicated,

Delusive thoughts increase boundlessly.

Hence one deviates from the true meaning,

Like the fools who end up exhausted for no reason.

If we constantly become attached to only words, and endlessly increase our delusive thoughts, we will completely deviate from the original meaning. Still, for no clear reason, the foolish beings of the world often emphasize the minutiae of wording, spending their entire lives pursuing the perfect words, and their entire day studying and discussing this topic.

I have had the opportunity to observe academics and concluded that some of them were truly destitute. For example, in discussing the aspiration of bodhichitta, a scholar would ask: "Is the aspiration to enlightenment recorded in the *Upanisads*?" "Is it recorded in the history of India?" "During the history of Tibetan Buddhism, in what year of the Current Era has it entered Tibet?" "How many viewpoints of different scholars existed at that time?" "What results have emerged from textual criticism?" "How is it accounted for from the perspective of historical materialism?" Although they keep accumulating conceptual elaborations, unfortunately they eventually lose

direction in their own clouds of confusion.

Certainly, if there were no words, it would be especially difficult for one to know the expressed content. Thanks to words, it is possible to understand meaning. But there is no need to always get so tangled.

Why does the Chan tradition have the statement of “not establishing words”? It does have a very profound meaning. In the *Platform Sutra*, there is a story about a nun called Wujinzang who often chanted the *Nirvana Sutra*. As soon as Master Huineng listened to a portion of it, he understood the sublime meaning in the sutra, and then explained it to her. When the nun asked about a character in the scripture, the master said, “I do not know this character, but you may ask about its meaning.” Surprised, the nun said, “How is it that you understand the meaning, if you do not even know the characters?” The master replied, “The sublime meaning of the Buddha has nothing to do with words.” The sixth patriarch Huineng had already perfectly realized the unsurpassed principles explained by all buddhas and bodhisattvas. Words are no longer necessary to him.

Indeed, we also find the phrase “not establishing words” in the Great Perfection. The *Treasury of Word and Meaning* and the *Treasury of Dharmadhatu*, included in the *Seven Treasuries* by Longchen Rabjam, contain a concerted critique of the conceptual elaboration regarding texts, whereas his *Wish-fulfilling Treasury* discusses all kinds of cases concerning the increase of conceptual mind by means of doctrine, debate, text, and poetics.

Today, many people in the world pay attention only to the quality of style and diction, and to how words are arranged. But they hold no regard for the content that is discussed therein. Indeed, there is no limit to conceptual minds, so it is not necessary to increase them. Many people keep expanding the types of conceptual thoughts. However, this is no different from children building sand castles. Eventually, one will

no longer know what direction one should take. Even with those who may have been spending many years as a monk, if one keeps gathering conceptual elaborations without concentrating one's effort on gaining meaning, one will not succeed in one's practice. Some ordained persons not only eventually give up their robes and return to being a lay person, they also sometimes begin to espouse erroneous views. The reason for this is that they have not invested their time and energy on the level of meaning. If one reflects every day about the meaning of the teachings and instructions, a transformation of one's mind will eventually occur.

In sum, when we study the Buddhadharma, we must understand the following: (1) we should rely on the teaching instead of individuals, and (2) in the teaching, we should rely on the meaning instead of the words. The meaning to which buddhas, bodhisattvas, and great masters have awakened is as profound as the unfathomable realm of the inseparability of appearance and emptiness. But if we genuinely and slowly become familiar with the principles of impermanence and no-self in the common vehicle, and cultivate them in our minds, we will obtain great benefits. If we further connect these principles with our daily lives, much of our sufferings and afflictions will promptly vanish without trace.

[VERSE 69]

Even for a single phrase like "Fetch the tree!"

The corresponding external objects are infinite.

Yet one will know to what it refers,

And the need for the words ends just there.

For instance, if someone says, "Bring me a tree!" Its actual meaning of this can be exceptionally broad. According to the analysis in Buddhist Logic, a "tree" could mean an eastern tree, a northern tree, a southern tree, or a western tree. Or it could mean a northeastern tree or a southeastern tree. There are indeed many possible meanings

even from the perspective of different directions. From the perspective of time, one may also ask if the “tree” is a future, a past, or a present tree. If it is a future tree, is the “tree” from next year or is it from the year after the next? There are indeed infinite answers if we are looking at the “tree” from the perspective of time. One may also ask what type of “tree” it is. Is it sandalwood tree, or an eaglewood tree? Is it a cypress tree, or a pine tree? If the tree were a sandalwood tree, is it white, red, or perhaps the green variety? Again, the answers could be limitless if we search in this manner, making it impossible to ever reach a conclusion. Therefore, if we have not started from the aspect of meaning, but have only sought answers from the textual aspect, we will meet with great difficulties.

Then why is it necessary to use names and expressions? Through names and expressions we will come to understand meaning which will be our eventual focus. This is also why previous generations began giving names to all things in the world. As it is explained in Buddhist Logic, when we use names we mix general characteristics with own characteristics into a single entity. When someone hears such names, he or she would gain an understanding of their meanings. Once that happens, the need for names and expressions ends just there.

Therefore, whether in the Buddhadharma or elsewhere, when we engage debate and analysis, we must not blindly follow words, or else we would be unable to reach any actual conclusion. If one truly understands, or has come to a realization of the content, it does not matter how or what words are expressed. In oral exams, the facial expressions of students who perfectly understand the meaning would show through even if they are unable to express their understanding clearly with proper words. Yet others, who are particularly good at making speeches, to the extent that they sometimes employ idiomatic expressions, may give soaring speeches with little or no expression of the true meaning of the words.

Therefore, what we need urgently is to understand the meaning of any teaching. If something really make sense to us, we would receive benefits from the meaning. It is the same with recitations. If we have an understood the meaning of a verse, we will not easily forget it for decades. However, if we have not understood the content of a teaching, although we may be able to recite it as fast as reciting the mani mantra, we would also forget it equally as fast. Therefore, I cannot overemphasize the importance of understanding the meaning.

[VERSE 70]

When a finger points to the bright moon,

The foolish children stare at the finger.

For fools, who are attached to words only,

It is difficult to understand even what they wish to understand.

It is not rational that we place such importance to words for words are only a means to express content. Let's use an example to illustrate this problem. A mother takes her beloved child atop a mountain. She then points her finger to the moon, and says, "Look at the round moon, how beautiful that is!" The mother keeps addressing her child in this way, but the silly child only looks at his mother's finger, without looking at the moon in the sky. Certainly the mother did not mean to say, "Look how beautiful my finger is!" However, the child formed the understanding that "My mother's finger is round, it is fine, it is white, it is beautiful, this, then, is the moon." He became attached to this meaning.

In Sakya Pandita's *Treasury of Valid Knowledge and Reasoning*, it is also said that when someone points to empty space with a finger, the foolish being will always look at the finger, believing that empty space is the finger. This is certainly a rather foolish conclusion.

Similarly, with respect to the words of the Buddhadharma, foolish beings will fail

to understand the meaning these words express, rather they will keep clinging to the words. Mipham Rinpoche once said that when hearing about emptiness, foolish beings will regard it as the mere emptiness that is similar to the absence of water in a bowl. When speaking of luminosity, they will regard it as something extremely bright. When discussing the union of appearance and emptiness, they will think about a black and a white rope tangled together. If one always cling to conceptual elaborations in this manner, one will never be able to understand the instructions of the great emptiness. Therefore, as we carry out our practice, we must always pay attention to grasping the meaning.

If we become too attached to words, it will be extremely difficult to gain the genuine meaning. For example, some of those who have studied poetics, or who are very good at style, when reading Buddhist scriptures, will pay too much attention to how the text is written, whether the words have been used properly, and whether the context is properly structured. While they keep thinking about such questions, they would neglect the content being expressed. In so doing, they are forsaking what matters the most.

Therefore, as we study Buddhist sutras or shastras, we must not concentrate on the quality of the wording alone since some of them were definitely not written with ease and grace. His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche once said that some masters, such as Mipham Rinpoche and Longchen Rabjam, might have studied a large amount of teachings in their previous lives and in this life, and their texts read extremely smooth. In contrast, there are some great tertons who, on the surface, may seem rather unintelligent, and yet the content they express is the vajra speech that directly flows from the realm of enlightenment and possesses a profound meaning. Therefore, we must abandon our proud attitude and be happy to accept the instructions of the great masters of the past that speak volumes of truth and were endowed with abundant blessings that would help us attain awakening.

It is worthwhile for everyone to ponder carefully the four reliances that Mipham Rinpoche has discussed here. Given the limited time I have in this document, I am afraid I may not have touched on the most profound meaning. Indeed, everyone should reflect and elaborate on it. After all, as students and practitioners, it is natural for us to encounter many doubts and uncertainties in our journey. Such doubts and uncertainties can only be eliminated through listening and reflection. In order to do so, we must depend on the sublime and sharp principles in treatises such as Mipham Rinpoche's. In this manner, we can overcome any affliction, doubt, and erroneous view in our mental continuum.

Rely on the Definitive Meaning, not the Provisional Meaning

G3: Rely on the Definitive Meaning, not the Provisional Meaning

[VERSE 71]

When entering into meaning,

Understand definitive and provisional meanings.

Do not rely on provisional meaning,

But rely on definitive meaning.

The eighty-four thousand teachings of the Buddha feature all kinds of meanings. Among these teachings, there exist teachings of provisional meaning, and teachings of definitive meaning. Therefore, as we approach meaning, we must first know which meanings are provisional, and which meanings are definitive.

In some of his works, Mipham Rinpoche explains that, there are two types of classification to distinguish provisional and definitive meanings. From the perspective of emptiness, the teachings on emptiness concern definitive meaning, whereas the teachings on appearance concern provisional meaning. According to this classification, the first turning of the Dharma wheel is provisional and the second is definitive, and within the third turning, half of the teachings are definitive and half are provisional.

From the perspective of the third turning of the Dharma wheel, the teachings wherein the manifested aspect of things accords with the real aspect is considered definitive meaning, whereas the teachings where the two are not in mutual accordance is considered provisional meaning. According to this classification, the teachings of the essential nature of tathagata is the highest among the teachings of definitive meaning, because its manifest aspect perfectly accords with its real aspect.

The perspective of emptiness as the definitive meaning, and of appearance as the provisional meaning, are well explained in many major scriptures and commentaries. In the *Praise of the Inconceivable Middle Way*, it is said, “The emptiness of all things is definitive meaning; their conventional aspect, such as production and cessation, as well as sentient beings and their life, is provisional meaning.” It means that, the ultimate truth of emptiness is the definitive meaning that is beyond the four extremes and the eight conceptual elaborations; while the aspect of appearance such as production, cessation, beings, and life, belongs to the conventional truth and is provisional meanings.

Therefore, we must gain knowledge of definitive and provisional meanings from the beginning. Having done so, we should not just rely on teachings of provisional meaning, but more on teachings of definitive meaning. Indeed, the Buddha explained teachings of provisional meaning only in order to lead beings endowed with a certain capacity to understand the teachings of definitive meaning. After we grasp this principle, we will no longer think of the adamant speech of the Buddha as having instances of contradictory or illogical elements.

Today, some dharma teachers, along with some lay practitioners, lack understanding of the distinction between definitive and provisional meanings. As they listen and reflect about the teachings, when they see that the Buddha here teaches that things exist, and there teaches that things do not exist, they wonder whether or not the omniscient Buddha might also be affected by contradiction. Hence, it is essential that we firmly grasp the distinction between definitive and provisional meanings through listening and reflection. This is a crucial point. In the eighth chapter of his *Treatise on Finding Comfort and Ease in the Nature of Mind*, Venerable Longchenpa discusses this principle in detail, which is described as the key to opening the treasury of the hidden intentions of the Buddha’s teachings. This is simple view of a complex matter that deserves a more thorough discussion elsewhere.

[VERSE 72]

The omniscient Buddha, in all his wisdom,

In accord with the lineages, capacities, and intentions of living beings,

Expounded the teachings of various vehicles of different levels,

Just like the rungs of a ladder.

Through his wisdom that knows the multiplicity of phenomena and the wisdom that knows the nature of all phenomena, the Buddha thoroughly perceives all things in both ultimate and conventional aspects. He thus perfectly understands each and every distinct element such as the lineages of all living beings, their sharp or dull faculties, as well as their intentions. As the sole individual capable of knowing these information, the Buddha knows that it is impossible for him to help sentient beings by only giving one type of teaching. For this reason, in order to help all beings to progress toward enlightenment, the Buddha presents the vehicles to enlightenment of different levels in a certain order, just like the steps of a ladder. In other words, he first teaches the common vehicle of cause and effect to beings of lower capacities, and only then does he present the teachings of definitive meaning.

In general, we can say that the Buddha's teachings are classified into the two vehicles of the Hinayana and of the Mahayana. In the *Immaculate Sky Sutra*, it is said, "In harmony with the capacities of sentient beings, I say that there are two vehicles." So according to the different dispositions of living beings, the Buddha has proclaimed the two vehicles of Hinayana and Mahayana, and the latter includes Vajrayana. In the Nyingma tradition, the capacities of beings are distinguished into nine types. Hence the Dharma spoken by the Buddha also is distinguished into nine vehicles, or nine yanas.

But are these the only fixed categories of distinction? Indeed, it is not so. In *The Lankavatara Sutra*, it is said, "As long as the mind wanders, there is no limit of the

vehicles of the teachings.” So as long as living beings have not attained nirvana, the distinctions into lower and greater vehicles will be limitless. It is possible then to establish a single vehicle for each living being according to his or her different dispositions. Hence, the Buddhadharma in its entirety is spoken as a response to the mental capacities of all living beings. From the vehicle of hearers up to the unsurpassed Great Perfection, in the sutra and in the tantra traditions, all vehicles are indeed needed. Therefore, we must understand that, among the Buddhadharma’s diverse instructions, some are simple and easy to understand, whereas others are extremely profound. To the sentient beings for which a teaching was spoken, such teaching is then a sublime teaching.

If a single type of teaching were good enough to guide all sentient beings towards liberation, there would be no need for the Buddha to pass on the eighty-four thousand types of teachings. A single teaching of emptiness, or the chanting of Amitabha’s name, may suffice for all. Certain Pure Land masters claim that all that the Buddha taught was for the practice of chanting Amitabha’s name. But if it were so, the Buddha would have only spoken Amitabha’s name, and it would not have been necessary for the Buddha to expound on other teachings. It is therefore clear why to some the Buddha taught the chanting of Amitabha’s name, while to others he taught the common vehicles, and to others still, he taught them how to become accomplished through the Vajaryana practices.

[VERSE 73]

***With a certain purpose in mind, he dispensed some teachings,
With eight kinds of implied and hidden intentions.
If interpreted literally, they go against valid knowledge,
But there are cases in which these teachings were necessary.***

The Dharma spoken by the Buddha can be distinguished into provisional and

definitive meanings. But how do we determine which is which? We can do so from the perspective of implied or hidden intention for the teaching.

Provisional teachings are teachings that if interpreted directly as they are presented may not accord with reality and may not be consistent with valid knowledge. However, there is a clear intent behind these teachings and there is a clear need for their presentation. In other words, teachings that meet the three conditions of intent, necessity, and inconsistency with valid knowledge are called provisional teachings. On the contrary, teachings that do not present these three conditions are called definitive teachings.

Occasionally, when a teacher is unable to explain a scripture or accept a teaching, he or she may state the following: “Oh! This teaching has a provisional meaning, it should not be explained in this way.” However, the fact is that it is not easy to differentiate between provisional and definitive meanings since there are different modes of distinction according to different viewpoints. In some ways, since everything we perceive is a deluded phenomenon that would not withstand analysis, any teaching about them is therefore provisional. As the Buddha said, “All appearances exist in an unreal fashion.”

In understanding provisional and definitive meanings, we must know the four kinds of implied intentions and the four kinds of hidden intentions. The four types of implied intentions are (1) implied intention pertaining to entrance, (2) implied intention pertaining to the natures, (3) implied intention pertaining to antidotes, and (4) implied intention pertaining to translation.

First, implied intention pertaining to entrance means letting someone who does not accept a certain truth enter into that very truth by means of a certain method. For example, in some sutras, the Buddha discusses the existence of form in external objects, yet the implied intention of his statements is that forms exist only in a dream-

like or an illusory way. If form truly exists in external objects, this would be inconsistent with valid knowledge, for when we observe atomic particles we would find that such existence does not withstand analysis. Similarly, in some sutras, the Buddha also claims the existence of a person. Why are these teachings necessary? Suppose that, from the outset, one tries to explain to non-Buddhists who do not yet have faith in the Buddha's teachings, or to individuals of the vehicle of hearers, that everything from form to omniscience is emptiness. These individuals will naturally become fearful and will be unable to accept these teachings due to their yet-to-be developed faculties. Therefore, prior to leading these people into the ultimate truth of emptiness, the Buddha in some sutras says that external objects exist, and living beings exist. This is how we define implied intention pertaining to entrance.

Second, we have implied intention pertaining to the natures. For example, in some scriptures the Buddha says that one is the lord of one's own self. He also confirms the existence of the three natures elaborated by the Mind-Only school. On a relative level, these teachings are correct because everything is a transformation of the mind. By depending on the correct mindfulness and exercising vigilance, one can guard one's own thoughts and behaviors, like the lord of oneself. However, if we were to put forth the same assertion on an ultimate level, this would be untenable since the mind is nonexistent. The three natures, as well as oneself and lord, are also nonexistent and all of them possess a nature of emptiness. Therefore, such views would certainly be inconsistent with the reasoning of the Middle Way. Nevertheless, it is possible to lead certain beings adhering to the Mind-Only school to enter into the ultimate truth of emptiness in this manner, making this is a necessary and useful step toward their gradual entrance into the Middle Way. Therefore, implied intention pertaining to the natures may be defined as the existence of a hidden intention in respect to the nature that is being established.

Next, we turn to implied intention pertaining to antidotes. For example, some

individuals think that, since Buddha Shakyamuni appeared in this world stained by the five impurities, he was not as supreme as other buddhas, and he ranked as the lowest among all buddhas. And this would be the reason why, in many scriptures on this topic, the Buddha says: “I once manifested as Krakucchanda Buddha.” Thanks to this method, it is possible to counter the scornful minds of these individuals.

Some individuals might engage the following thought: “To encounter the Buddhadharma is not a difficult thing and that Buddhadharma is easy to obtain, right?” In order to counter this irreverent and incorrect attitude, the Buddha says: “I was once able to obtain the Buddhadharma only after engaging ascetic practices for cosmic ages equal to the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River.” This is how we define implied intention pertaining to antidotes.

The last one is implied intention pertaining to translation. If you try to interpret the content of some teachings literally, you will be unable to understand its real meaning because its real meaning is something else. For example, in the *Chapter on Causes and Conditions* we find instructions such as the following: “One should kill parents, along with the King and the two purified ones, and the objective family should be destroyed, then will such a person attain purity.” Here, the *two purified ones* originally refer to Brahmanas and Sramanas, while the *objective family* stands for the family members. Hence, the literal meaning of this stanza is that parents, the King, Brahmanas and Sramanas, as well as the family members should all be killed. Only then would such individual be able to attain the fruition of purity.

But we cannot interpret this stanza according to its literal meaning. Indeed, according to the *Treatise on Finding Comfort and Ease in the Nature of Mind*, the term “parents” here refers to craving and grasping, the “King” stands for the storehouse consciousness, the “two purified ones” are the view holding the existence of a permanent self and the view of holding mistaken rites and deeds as superior, while the

“objective family” means the aggregation of the eight consciousness. So the accurate translation here is, if anyone completely destroys craving, grasping, his storehouse consciousness and the aggregation of the eight consciousness, then one would truly know one’s fundamental nature of mind and such a person would attain liberation.

Therefore, it is critical that we understand a statement’s implied intention. The languages of the world have meanings that go beyond the literal meanings of the words. In order to guide beings endowed with different dispositions, the Buddha makes meanings implicit. Within his teachings, there are various levels of meanings such as outer meaning, inner meaning, implied meaning, and secret meaning.

Besides the aforementioned four implied intentions, there are also four kinds of hidden intentions: (1) hidden intention directed toward equality, (2) hidden intention directed toward other meanings, (3) hidden intention directed toward other times, and (4) hidden intention directed toward other individuals.

Let us first examine hidden intention directed toward equality. The Buddha says: “During such cosmic age, I once manifested as Buddha Krakucchanda.” Yet indeed, Buddha Krakucchanda and the present Buddha Shakyamuni differ in certain ways. However, from the perspective of the equality of the realm of reality, not only there is no distinction between Buddha Shakyamuni and Krakucchanda, but the true nature of all sentient beings and that of all buddhas are non-dual. Such is what we define hidden intention directed toward equality.

Hidden intention directed toward other meanings is fundamentally the same thing as the foregoing implied intention pertaining to the natures.

For hidden intention directed toward other times, let’s use the example mentioned in certain scriptures that one could become a buddha upon chanting a mantra or a buddha’s name. In truth, this does not necessarily mean that one would become a buddha at the very moment the chanting occurs. Rather, it could mean that one may

become a buddha at a later time, or for those who are already endowed with adequate causes and conditions they would quickly become buddhas.

Go further on this point, one might ask “Is reciting Amitabha’s name in order to take rebirth in Sukhavati also an intention directed to other times? Is it not a definitive teaching?” This thought process is incorrect. A long time ago, a Khenpo made a similar statement in front of His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche. His Holiness firmly admonished this Khenpo and on the next day, provided many reasons for his criticism. The former great masters such as Dzogchen Rinpoche and Mipham Rinpoche also had various instructions on this subject. I also provided various types of reasoning on this topic when giving teaching on *The Instructions on Sukhavati*. Therefore, we must not have this kind of doubt. It is illogical to engage reasoning about provisional meanings in any matter without any observation and it is critical that one uses the wisdom of discrimination.

The fourth is hidden intention directed toward other individuals. Some individuals regard worldly generosity as the most important, and have a particularly strong attachment to generosity. In respect to this, the Buddha says: “Generosity is inferior, holding vows is more important.” While others may believe that only holding vows is important and other types of virtuous deeds should be considered as inferior. In these cases, the Buddha praises other practices such as endurance or generosity. This is what we call the provisional teaching that contains a hidden intention directed to other individuals.

Therefore, in studying Buddhist scriptures, and especially the classics of the sutra tradition, learning how to differentiate between definitive and provisional meanings is of great significance. Today, most people have no time to study the scriptures nor do they have any strong interest in them. While those who have the time and interest in studying the scriptures may sometimes end up in a state of confusion if they don’t

know how to differentiate these implied and hidden intentions. For this reason, I have repeatedly asked everyone to gain a clear understanding of the four reliances. If you do not have a genuine understanding, you could probably distort and misunderstand the Buddha's clear instruction.

[VERSE 74]

***Therefore, from the four schools of Buddhist philosophy
Through to the ultimate vajra vehicle,
That which is not realized by those of the lower levels,
Is ascertained by those of the higher levels.***

Hence, from the four doctrinal schools of the sutra traditions, namely the Vaibhasika and the Sautrantika for the Hinayana, as well as the Cittamatra and the Madhyamaka for the Mahayana, and through the Kriya, Caryā, and Yoga classes of the outer tantras, and up to the Mahayoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga classes of the inner tantras, the unsurpassed vajra vehicle of the Great Perfection is the peak of the stages of all these vehicles. The realizations attained by the persons of the lower vehicles are not at all high, for the portion of the path which they have not realized has been already realized by those of the higher vehicles. This amounts to what is stated in the ninth chapter of wisdom in *The Way of the Bodhisattvas*, where the wisdom of the yogins of the higher levels surpasses by far the wisdom of those of the lower levels.

For example, the Cittamatra tradition is capable of completely refuting the partless particles posited by the Vaibhasika and the Sautrantika. And it is possible, by means of the reasonings of the Madhyamaka system, to completely refute the consciousness of self-awareness posited by the Cittamatra. Further, it is possible, by relying on the instructions of the Great Perfection, to completely abolish the final, subtle grasping posited by the Madhyamaka, and to clearly understand the obscure passages in the Madhyamaka concerning the luminous essence of the tathagata.

Perhaps, confidence alone placed by some individuals in the Great Perfection is not adequate. Indeed, this depends on the power of one's former actions. Yet one must not overlook this vehicle. Through listening and reflection, one will realize that this supreme method is the only wish-fulfilling jewel among all teachings and instructions. In the sutra tradition, it is said that each sentient being is originally a buddha and possesses the Buddha nature. The scriptures of the most definitive meaning in the sutra traditions contain the descriptions on this topic. However, just as in the case of the twenty-ninth moon, these descriptions are not clear at all. On the other hand, the outer and inner tantras, especially the essential instructions in the Great Perfection, provide a thoroughly clear explanation of the essence of the tathagata. For those who lack knowledge of such essential instructions, they should not minimize the importance of this great teaching.

[VERSE 75]

This is established by scripture and by reasoning.

Having seen this, the wise seizes definitive meanings,

And like a swan drawing milk from water,

Plays in the ocean of Buddhist teachings.

The superiority of the higher vehicles with respect to the lower vehicles can be thoroughly established not only through Buddhist scriptures but also through referential reasoning. In particular, once one has studied the Vajrayana principles such as explained in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, one will certainly appreciate the supreme power of the Vajrayana methods, as well as their reliability and rationality. Therefore, one should accept and maintain the teachings of definitive meaning, particularly those of the Vajrayana. Even though we have not discussed many of the essential Vajrayana instructions here, we must understand their superiority from a theoretical aspect.

For some who may not have had the guidance of a qualified teacher, or having

been exposed since an early age to the teachings of the Hinayana, they may regard the teachings of the Hinayana as supreme. These individuals will neglect the definitive meanings of the sutra and tantra traditions. On the other hand, some masters in the tantra traditions could be quite the opposite. They would completely neglect the doctrinal principles of the sutra traditions, focusing only on specific principles of the Great Perfection, and believing that only they could reach the highest state.

In truth, we should learn in stages just as the Buddha suggested, for this only is the best way. From the depth of my heart, I am truly grateful to His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, for he taught us the most basic doctrinal principles such as the law of causality, and the suffering of samsara, as well as the principles of Buddhist Logic and of the Middle Way, and further, many profound teachings in the Great Perfection. This tradition is the reason why many believe that Tibet truly is the precious land of the Buddhadharma.

Yet there are also individual Tibetan masters who do not follow this tradition. For example, other than their understanding of some tantric practices, they could be completely ignorant of many principles in the sutra traditions, and do not understand the concept of provisional and definitive meanings. As a result, their conduct and deeds deviate from the teachings. More importantly, some of them do not even follow the principle of cause and effect. Some of them would say, “Everything is the nature of the mind, so there is nothing at all to be grasped.” As such, they believe they could do whatever they please, committing many infractions of Buddhist traditions such as eating meat, killing, and carrying out sexual misconduct.

Therefore, we must first understand the stages of the Buddhadharma. As we progress, we will see that within the sutra traditions the Middle Way is the most sublime, and that within the tantra traditions the Great Perfection is the most exalted. Furthermore, we must practice and maintain these exalted teachings of definitive

meaning for the rest of our lives. Swans are capable of separating water mixed with milk in order to ingest the latter. In a similar fashion, the wise, thanks to his accumulation of wisdom and merits, together with the essential instructions of his teacher, will enjoy being in the ocean of the Buddha's teachings. In contrast, the foolish, as well as those who lack merit or sharp faculties, will regrettably experience Buddhadharma only in a limited way. In summary, as we listen and reflect on these teachings, we must understand which are the genuinely essential teachings of the entire Buddhadharma, and then never abandon them.

[VERSE 76]

***The immensely profound Vajrayana,
Is sealed with six places and four levels of meaning,
Associated with the essential instructions of the lineage,
And established by stainless reasoning.***

Here we turn to the means by which we interpret the supreme Vajrayana teachings. Certainly, in the Vajrayana tradition there isn't any teaching with completely provisional meaning. Yet indeed, there are differences among the teachings that Vajradhara proclaimed for beings of different capacities. Through the exalted methods of the profound Vajrayana, disciples of advanced faculties can attain accomplishment in their present body, while those of lesser faculties may need seven to sixteen lifetimes.

Today, many followers of the sutra traditions do not regard the doctrine of becoming a buddha in the present lifetime as a viable doctrine. This is due to their mistaken view on principles such as the power of the Buddha's teaching. In fact, many individuals have attained awakening in their present lifetime by following not only the tantra traditions, but also the sutra traditions. We have discussed these issues elsewhere, so we will not dwell on them here. In conclusion, the Vajrayana tradition is

the peak of all vehicles. It is an exalted, profound teaching, a teaching that less advanced individuals of lower capacities are unable to comprehend.

As mentioned above, the sutra traditions are interpreted by means of the four hidden intentions and the four implied intentions, while the tantra traditions are interpreted by means of the six places and the four levels of meaning. Years ago, when His Holiness went to India, at the Ngagyur Nyingma Institute in the Namdroling Monastery, there was a tulku who made a Dharma offering to His Holiness by praising the various supreme instructions of Longchen Rabjam and Mipham Rinpoche. He said, “The magnificent teachings of the Nyingmapa are marked not only by the seal of the six places and the four levels of meaning, but also by the powerful blessings of the lineage masters.”

The six places include (1) definitive meaning, (2) provisional meaning, (3) intentional discourse, (4) unintentional discourse, (5) meanings that agree with words, (6) meanings that contradict words. Generally speaking, that which is proclaimed from the perspective of the stage of generation is said to be a teaching of provisional meaning, while that which is spoken from the stage of completion is said to be a teaching of definitive meaning. Intentional discourse refers to teachings that may have several meanings, and therefore with some hidden meaning; unintentional discourse is a formulation that has no additional hidden meanings. Meanings that agree with words are formulations of words that are in harmony with worldly discourses, so there is a perfect agreement of meanings with words. Meanings that contradict words refer to certain formulations of words that are uncommon in both worldly discourse and other Buddhist commentaries. For example, an instance of an uncommon formulation occurs with the terms “union” and “wrath”. In listening and reflecting about the Vajrayana teachings it is necessary to gain a thorough understanding of these six places. Failing to do so would make it extremely difficult to grasp their real meaning. These topics will be discussed in more details in another article.

The four levels of meaning are (1) literal meaning, (2) general meaning, (3) hidden meaning, and (4) ultimate meaning. If one wishes to grasp the meaning of Vajrayana teachings, one must certainly understand these four levels of meaning. They will be discussed in more detail below.

One must rely on the essential teachings and oral instructions of the lineage masters because it would be extremely difficult to realize the true nature of the mind if one abandons the instructions of one's master. Why were there so many individuals who have achieved awakening in the Chan tradition? It was thanks to the instructions of their masters, as well as their ways of expression. It is the same in the tantra traditions, where the master's instructions are extremely important. If one relies on the master's instructions and on stainless reasonings, one will grasp the meaning of Vajrayana teachings.

[VERSE 77]

All things are originally in the inseparable union

Of primordial purity and great equality,

Which is ascertained

By means of the two types of valid knowledge.

The nature of everything is the inseparable union of primordial purity and great equality, where great equality refers to the great emptiness. As we engage analysis by means of the two types of valid knowledge in the sutra traditions, namely, the valid knowledge of the ultimate and the valid knowledge of the conventional, we would realize that all things are equal and pure. Indeed, there is no single principle in the tantra traditions that cannot be established by the valid knowledge of the sutra traditions. Therefore, we must have confidence that the Vajrayana teachings are the most essential and profound teachings of the entire Buddhadharma.

[VERSE 78]

***In the tradition of sutra and in the stage of generation,
In the stage of completion and in the Great Perfection,
Through the literal, general, hidden, and ultimate meanings respectively,
One grasp their essential points without contradictions.***

Let us turn to the four levels of meaning. With no contradiction, we are able to grasp the essential points of the sutra traditions through literal meaning, those at the stage of generation through general meaning, those at the stage of completion with elaboration through hidden meanings, and those at the stage of completion without elaboration through ultimate meanings. From this, we also understand how the term “union” is interpreted in different ways according to different contexts.

[VERSE 79]

***Having obtained the profound realization of the ultimate meaning,
The heirs of the Buddha, endowed with supreme wisdom,
Maintain the inexhaustible treasury of the Dharma,
Like the victory banners of the Dharma of transmission and of realization.***

If, through listening and reflection, and relying on the essential instructions of one’s teacher, one genuinely grasps the principles in the wish-fulfilling tantra tradition, and generates an unshakeable certainty, this wise person is the heir of the Buddha, who, like the son of a wheel-turning king, will not be damaged by any adversity or erroneous view. And even if one is unable to understand all the principles of Vajrayana perfectly, by simply placing an unshakable faith in one’s teacher and in his methods, and by earnestly putting into practice the essential instructions that point directly to the nature of the mind, one can also become the heir of the Buddha, “the son of a wheel-turning king”.

These heirs of the Buddha will obtain an inexhaustible treasury of the Dharma, and

will be able to perfectly accept and maintain the most essential and valuable principles of Buddha Shakyamuni's teaching. They will thus uphold the victory banner of the Dharma of transmission and of realization.

Such is my teacher, His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche. I think what he has accomplished in his lifetime is truly remarkable. He was versed in both traditions of sutra and tantra. He understood both the doctrinal teachings and the oral instructions. And he not only understood them himself, but also handed them all down to us with a loving mind. Furthermore, his transmission of these teachings went beyond the literal level. He empowered us by passing on their meaning. For large groups of his disciples, we are truly fortunate that having received such teaching, an inexpressible joy arises from the depth of our hearts. Particularly, some of his great disciples have genuinely grasped the instructions taught in the Vajrayana traditions, especially the knowledge of the nature of the mind. Moreover, they have also begun to gradually transmit this knowledge and realization to the next generations in their own ways. So they are truly the recipients, the holders, and the bearers of the tathagata's teachings.

In contrast, if what a person says is appealing on a verbal level only while at the same time he or she does not put these words into practice, and the view of Vajrayana on the indivisibility of equality and purity or even the realization of the basic teachings such as impermanence and renunciation are absent in this person's mind, then such individual is neither a genuine bearer of the Dharma nor a rare spiritual teacher for he or she is merely repeating in an uncritical manner what is said by others.

Therefore, no matter if we are a religious mentor or an ordinary student, we should first generate, from the depth of our hearts, a firm confidence in the tantra traditions. Then, by following the methods explained above, we would strive to gain an understanding of the doctrinal principles of the Vajrayana teaching. Further, we must also be accompanied by the essential instructions of our teacher. As these causes and

conditions come together, we would begin to recognize the nature of our minds. And after that, we must put them into practice with no interruption, as if restless. Without continuous practice, this recognition of the nature of the mind won't take too much effects as the time of our death approaches. In the boundless samsara, various conceptual minds and unvirtuous habits could contaminate our minds. Hence, we must break free from them and be able to stably maintain and abide in the nature of the mind. In so doing, we would become true inheritors of the tathagata's teachings.

Rely on Wisdom, not the Conceptual Mind

G4: Rely on Wisdom, not the Conceptual Mind

[VERSE 80]

When practicing according to definitive meaning,

Do not rely on the mind that pursues terms and expressions,

That discriminates conceptually, and that is dual, as perceiver and perceived,

Rather, rely on the wisdom of non-duality.

In the foregoing we've said that one should not rely on the person, but that one must rely on the teachings. Concerning the teachings, there is a linguistic expression of the teachings, and there is the meaning of the teachings. We must rely on the meaning of the teachings, and cannot rely on their superficial expression. Furthermore, as for the meaning of the teachings, there are definitive and provisional meanings. We must rely on the teachings of definitive meaning.

Once we penetrate the definitive meaning of the teaching, and put it into practice through meditation, we should not rely on a conceptual and dualistic mind that pursues linguistic discrimination and operates through a perceiving subject and a perceived object. In contrast, we must rely on the wisdom that transcends the duality of perceiver and perceived.

However, if it is currently too difficult for us to rely on the non-dual wisdom, we must rely on the teaching that is the object of the non-dual wisdom of all buddhas and bodhisattvas. Such teaching, if it is taught by the Buddha, must be a sutra that ascertains the ultimate truth such as the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*, or a tantra that consists of the supreme instructions such as the Dzogchen practice. If such teachings were not

from the Buddha, then they must be given by those great bodhisattvas such as Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, Maitreya, and etc. In relying upon these teachings, wisdom will gradually develop in our mind.

We must understand that some teachings are objects of the conceptual mind, that is, they are teachings that follow what we ascertain with our conceptual minds and with language. This is necessary for common beings to understand them. But other teachings, such as the view of emptiness, as well as the luminosity of the essence of tathagatas, are all teachings realized by buddhas and bodhisattvas with their wisdom. Being the pure objects of the wisdom of buddhas and bodhisattvas, common beings sometimes find them difficult to fathom.

What we should pursue then are not those teachings that can be ascertained by the dualistic conceptual mind. As it is said in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*, “Because ignorance enshrouds nature, it is said to be conventional.” Ignorance obscures the mind of ordinary beings, hence, the teaching that is the object of our ignorant mind is a conventional teaching that cannot thoroughly ascertain the ultimate truth. Therefore, what we must pursue is the transcendental teaching of the non-dual wisdom only through which we can achieve liberation from samsara.

In today’s world, Dharma practice is sometimes linked to the purpose of business, for healing the sick, for obtaining renown, and for attaining temporary accomplishments. All of these will not help us eliminate the afflictive and cognitive obstructions in our mental continuums, nor can they grant us genuine liberation from samsara. However, if we truly pursue the teachings of non-dual wisdom, eventually we will be able to eliminate these afflictive and cognitive obstructions. Hence, as we seek out the Dharma teachings, we must pay attention to the above.

Furthermore, the teacher is the source of the Buddhadharma. Today, in the age of degeneration, one should seek a teacher endowed with the aspiration of Bodhichitta

and the correct view of emptiness. If a master has no knowledge of these transcendental teachings, it would be hard to attain genuine wisdom by relying on this master.

In sum, we must rely on wisdom and not rely on the conceptual mind. In order to do so, we should learn and recite the precious treatises composed by accomplished masters, in which all they discuss are about the wisdom of absorbing into and of emerging from the meditation of emptiness. The best practice is to gradually integrate these teachings with our mind.

[VERSE 81]

***As for the ordinary mind that operates with conceptual ideas,
Whose nature is the duality of perceiver and perceived,
The object it grasps, along with itself, is illusory,
And it can never realize the actual nature of reality.***

Why should the ordinary mind not be pursued? Because it operates on conceptual discrimination, it has attachments to the existent or to the nonexistent, to establishment or to negation, to emptiness or to appearance, and it is entirely of the nature of the perceiver and of the perceived. Perceiver and perceived are mere illusions of the conceptual mind in ordinary beings. Anything that can be grasped is entirely illusory. In both the *Sutra on the Ten Grounds* and *The Jewel-Heap Sutra*, it is said that all things that we see, hear, and feel are illusory. In *The Lankavatara Sutra* it is also said: “All things arise conventionally, but ultimately they lack the nature of self-existence.” The implication here is that the appearance of all things is in an illusion that only exists in the conventional realm, for if there is production there is also cessation. Indeed, the ultimate true reality that is beyond all conceptual elaborations cannot appear in the conventional realm, for it is absolutely not the object of a conceptual mind.

Hence, by merely having such discriminating mind, one is never able to realize the actual nature of reality that is beyond the perceiver and perceived. In other words, as long as the web of conceptual grasping is not eliminated, it will be impossible to realize the ultimate state that is beyond conceptual elaboration. If we genuinely transcend the grasping of all appearances, then, at that very moment, we will understand the true nature of all things.

In the *King of Samadhi Sutra* it is said: “Far from the two extremes, the wise abide in the middle way.” It means that having reached beyond the four extremes and the eight elaborations, the wise truly dwell in the middle way. This is the essential meaning of the Middle Way. It should be clear to all that the conceptual mind is nothing but a temporary grasping. For example, our conceptual minds may grasp emptiness or luminosity: “These things are empty, these things are luminous.” And this is understandable, for our conceptual minds perceive objects only in this way and are unable to see their true nature. But when you reach the ultimate state, it will become clear that all things are indeed false, illusory, and unreal.

If we only seek such unreal things, then we are wrong. It is as if someone in need of water saw a mirage on a distant path. On the surface, it might look like a real river, yet in truth the mirage cannot quench anyone’s thirst. Along the same reasoning, the ultimate object to be attained by whoever aspires to liberation is the non-dual wisdom of buddhas and bodhisattvas. Prior to obtaining this kind of wisdom, all appearances being grasped are mere illusions.

Clearly, this is our ultimate goal. In *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*, all things are refuted with no exception, including virtue, non-virtue, the tathagata, etc. In order to reach such heights, we will need to abandon everything that we have learned on a conventional level.

[VERSE 82]

***As for attachment, be it to the real or to the unreal,
To both the real and the unreal, or to neither the real nor the unreal,
All of them, along with the way of attachment, are grasping,
And are within the domain of Mara,***

As long as there is attachment, no matter if it is attachment to such real things as the pillar or the bottle, or to such unreal things as empty space or the son of a barren woman, or to both or to neither of these, provided that you have a perceived object and a perceiving mind, these are in fact forms of grasping that are from an unstable and discriminating mind, a mind that cannot be used as a sword to cut samsara at its very root.

From the standpoint of the ultimate view of emptiness, if there is anything to grasp, whether virtuous or non-virtuous, at that very moment this very grasping is comparable to the activity of a Mara. In the *Sutra on Manjusri's Playful Dance*, it is said, "However much one grasps, one's actions will amount to that much, and such is Mara's activity."

What we must know is that all kinds of grasping and discrimination are obstacles to practice. Here, the verse says that attachment to anything is a type of grasping. In the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*, it is said that this grasping is an obscuration to practice. In *The Jewel-Heap Sutra*, the Buddha said to the assembly that if someone experiences perceiver and perceived, he or she has fallen under the influence of Mara. In like manner, a lack of confidence in the Mahayana is also due to Mara's temptations. Therefore, from the standpoint of prajnaparamita, what is generally called Mara is not necessarily a terrifying figure with eyes wide open and protruding fangs. The real Mara is the grasping to any appearance or conception when one desires to engage the concentration of the non-dual wisdom, or when one ascertains the view of the

ultimate. Such grasping includes grasping to mere emptiness, grasping to the essence of the tathagatas, and grasping to the aspiration of Bodhichitta.

In some of his instructions, Mipham Rinpoche said that when one ascertains the view of the ultimate, attachment to all such things must be dissolved into the realm of reality. In *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*, it is said that nirvana is nonexistent, and that the tathagata, the Three Jewels, and the Four Truths are also nonexistent. Having analyzed through reasoning and scriptural evidence, everything loses its substance to be grasped.

[VERSE 83]

As is stated in the sutras.

On the basis of any kind of refutation or establishment,

It is impossible to destroy whatever is grasped.

Having seen that there is nothing to refute or to establish, one is liberated.

No matter what method we employ to refute or to establish, in no way can we destroy all that has been grasped. “Refutation” refers to the negation of the existence of existing things. For example, when someone engages the reasoning of neither one nor many, or the diamond splinters, in order to analyze the pillar or the bottle, one concludes that they both are nonexistent. “Establishment” refers to positing the nonexistence of things, such as the son of a barren woman, mere emptiness, or the reality of the emptiness of all things. Some commentators regard this manner of refutation and establishment to be the tathagata’s implied meaning. Yet it is not. For, if one engages such mode of refutation and establishment, one will be utterly unable to destroy all that have been grasped, or to put an end to concepts.

Therefore, as we ascertain the view of the ultimate, we must get rid of all attachments by eliminating dualistic perceptions and conceptual elaborations. Once we have eliminated all conceptual elaborations, we will see that either on the

conventional or on the ultimate level, there is nothing whatsoever to establish, and there is nothing whatsoever to refute. Only then and at that very moment, will we have genuinely seen the reality of all things or their ultimate truth, thus we attain liberation.

In like manner, the same reasoning is explained in the scriptures and commentaries of the sutra and tantra traditions, such as in Maitreya's *Ornament of Clear Realization* and in the *Hevajra Tantra*. In the *Uttaratantra Shastra*, Maitreya says: "There is nothing to be refuted in this, nor is there anything to establish. Observing the true nature as the way it truly is, one sees the true nature and attains liberation." When we ascertain the view of the ultimate, there is nothing whatsoever to be refuted, nor is there the slightest trace of anything to be established. If we rely on the master's instructions with sincere devotion, then the proper causes and conditions will eventually come together to enable us to see and abide in the true nature of reality. As a result, we will surely gain liberation from the three realms of samsara. Examples of this process are found in the biographies and teachings of many lineage masters.

In sum, when we see that there is nothing to be refuted or to be established, at this very time we will have reached the highest state and the domain of buddhas and bodhisattvas. Ordinary beings like us should have confidence in this process and pray that they may reach this state.

[VERSE 84]

***Having done away with both perceiver and perceived,
The primordial wisdom naturally reveals its luminosity.
Having eliminated all four conceptual extremes,
This is called supreme primordial wisdom.***

After one reaches this state, is it a state that lacks any feeling, or is it some other kind of state? Indeed, it is in no way a state with no feelings, like an arrow shot in midair, or a rock thrown into the ocean. In this particular state, from the perspective

of attachment, all extremes such as existence and nonexistence, being and nonbeing, have been eliminated. There is absolutely no attachment to any conceptual elaboration and the perceiver and the perceived have both dissolved naturally into the true realm of reality. However, from the perspective of self-awareness, one is capable of knowing the natural luminosity of the realm of reality by means of one's individual realization. In other words, without depending on causes and conditions, the primordial wisdom of individual realization would naturally manifest.

As it is said in the scriptures, "The natural, primordial wisdom manifests without abiding." In the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*, it is also said, "There is no mind in the mind, for the nature of the mind is luminosity." This nature of luminosity exists naturally, just like sunlight will naturally appear where there is a sun. Yet this is not something insentient. Also it is not as if one were sleeping at night, lacking any feeling whatsoever. It is, as discussed in the *Beacon of Certainty*, a state where one would naturally know by oneself.

Therefore, although all attachments have been eliminated, there does exist this kind of supreme state beyond all kinds of attachments. And of all attainments, this is the most supreme. In the *Condensed Prajnaparamita*, it is said: "One attains the sublime, subtle wisdom of no death, hence it is called the perfection of wisdom." The implication is that, when we attain the wisdom of no birth and no death, this is the wisdom from the other shore, namely, prajnaparamita, or the perfection of wisdom. The perfection of wisdom is in no way a conceptual thought saying, "All things are empty." In contrast, it is one's genuine realization of the true nature of all things, attained as a result for one's master's instructions and one's devotion to the Buddha's teachings. On the path of cultivation, all practitioners at different stages should be able to attain this sublime wisdom. Yet no one who lacks cultivation in the Buddha's teaching, or who lacks faith in achieving Buddhahood, will ever attain this wisdom.

[VERSE 85]

Like sunshine appearing to a blind person,

It is never seen by ordinary beings.

Failing to know it, however much they think about it,

Foolish beings generate fear.

Suppose a blind person is faced with forms of matter such as pillars, bottles, mountains, rivers, and the earth, because he or she has no functioning eyes, he or she has no way to behold the myriads of sights. Along the same reasoning, for foolish beings who lack any accumulation of merits and who lack confidence in the Mahayana teaching, although the primordial nature of the mind and the essential nature of all things have been with them from the beginning and have never abandoned them, regardless of the perspective from which they might consider, these beings will never be able to completely understand the true nature.

In the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, there is an excellent testimony of this: Take, for example, someone who is blind since birth, who does not see the sun, yet this does not mean that there is no sun rising in the world. Anyone who has eyes will see it clearly, and all will follow their task and do their jobs. Along similar lines, according to differences in terms of whether or not they practice, as well as differences concerning the power of what they practice, people may attain entirely different achievements. In general, common beings are like blind people, although the sun rises, they are utterly unable to see it. But enlightened beings, along with individuals who practice, are comparable to people who have functioning eyes. As a result of their individual accumulated acts and to the state they have achieved through practice, they are perfectly able to see.

Therefore, common beings will find it hard to accept this state, regardless of how much they ponder about it. Not only can they not accept it, fear will also arise in the minds of some foolish individuals: if everything is empty, and all things that truly exist

are actually nonexistent, then, will not the principles of cause and effect, such as good rewards following virtuous actions, and bad rewards following non-virtuous actions, also entirely collapse? Will virtue and non-virtue be entirely nonexistent? As Aryadeva once said: “Upon hearing the name of emptiness, great fear arises in the mind of all fools.” In *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*, Nagarjuna also said: “Those with shallow wisdom see all things as the appearance of either existence or nonexistence.” That is, individuals with a limited wisdom see everything as either the appearance of existence, or as the appearance of nonexistence. Beyond these two, they are unable to see the primordial and authentic aspect of all things since it is fundamentally hidden from them.

The people of this world, including both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, are especially attached to appearance. I once heard someone said: “That person has superhuman powers, he can emanate light!” Many regard this kind of phenomena as particularly rare. In fact, this is not the case. For if dimly radiating a tiny bit of light amounts to a superhuman power, then sweating should also be considered the manifestation of a superpower.

[VERSE 86]

However, relying on the true and noble teaching,

On the reasoning of refuting all extremes,

And on the power of the master’s instructions,

As if one’s vision were restored, one will see that for oneself.

Since common beings are unable to see the true aspect, like blind people who are unable to see anything, then is it fundamentally impossible for the primordial and true nature of all things to be seen? This is absolutely not so. Throughout history, we have seen the biographies of numerous great masters who have genuinely realized the true nature of things.

As such, if we rely on their manner of awakening, we would then also be able to see the true nature of all things. But what must we rely on specifically? First, it is the reliance on the noble teaching of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, and especially the scriptures of definite meaning, that is, the supreme and noble teachings of the Mahayana spoken by the Buddha, such as the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*, *The Jewel-Heap Sutra*, and *The Lankavatara Sutra*.

Second, it is the reasonings that refute all extremes and all conceptual elaborations, such as the reasonings explained in Nagarjuna's *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*, in Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way*, and in Chandrakirti's *Introduction to the Middle Way*. These works are all well-proven thanks to the unparalleled wisdom of their authors and generations of masters.

Third, it is the important instructions of the lineage masters, such as the instructions passed down from generation to generation. Beginning with Padmasambhava and up to Patrul Rinpoche, Mipham Rinpoche, and Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, thanks to the power of their sublime instructions, it is possible to see the fundamental nature of all things quite easily. These include instructions in the sutra traditions, those from the lineage masters of the Chan tradition, and even more in the tantra traditions.

These three conditions mentioned above are indispensable. However, some individuals today say the following: "In studying the Buddha's teaching one only needs to study the sutras, not shastras." And some eminent masters in the Han Buddhism also have the similar opinion. They emphasize that, "It is enough to concentrate your efforts on the study of a few sutras, and you needn't study any commentary beyond these." I believe that we must question these statements.

Historically in India, there were just a few masters, such as Nagarjuna, prophesied by the Buddha who were capable of genuinely relying on their own power to interpret

Buddhist sutras. Beyond them, many great masters of later ages, including Chandrakirti, explicitly claimed not to be able to fully rely on their own power to explain Buddhist sutras. In his *Introduction to the Middle Way*, Chandrakirti said

*This way of explanation I, the bhikshu Chandrakirti,
Gathered from the Karikas that teach the Middle Way,
And here correctly I have set it down
According to both scripture and instruction.*

So he was able to understand the profound teaching by relying on the noble teaching and on correct reasoning, aided by such instructions as those contained in Nagarjuna's treatises. If that was how he composed his work, requiring Buddhist sutras and shastras, as well as the informed reasonings of other masters in order to understand the profound teaching, how would we ordinary beings be able to grasp the profound meaning of the Dharma without the help of the commentaries composed by the great masters of the past?

Without the masters' instructions, we ordinary beings cannot possibly "chew" scriptures relying on our own power. Without the reasonings of the eminent masters of the past, it is simply not sufficient to just look up words in a dictionary. It is indeed true that some commentaries were not really composed by great accomplished masters. At present, as ordinary practitioners or scholars write commentaries, no matter how well they write such works, their commentaries may not necessarily comply with the conceptual and scholastic definitions of commentaries specific to the Mahayana shastras.

In sum, we must have confidence in the Buddhadharma, and we must rely on Buddhist sutras and shatras, on the reasonings that refute all extremes, and on the essential instructions by our masters. Eventually, we will be able to see the true nature of all things, like a blind person who, having obtained clear vision, is able to see all

forms.

If one reaches the first bhumi of a bodhisattva, one can then attain such state. However, when our status is that of a common being, we should be able to achieve an illustrative primal wisdom, a state that is similar to enlightened wisdom. In his *Beacon of Certainty*, Mipham Rinpoche says that, although we are now ordinary beings, by means of the instructions of our master, we can virtually see the fundamental luminosity of our minds in a way that is free from the four extremes and the eight conceptual elaborations, so that we will have profound confidence, and harbor no doubts, in the teachings that we bear.

[VERSE 87]

At that time one is able to savor,

The nectar-like taste of the Buddhadharma.

With eyes filled for hundreds of times with faith and joy,

One concentrates always on the Buddha's wisdom body.

At that very moment, one will be perfectly able to savor the fine taste of the teachings imparted by Buddha Shakyamuni in the second and third turnings of the Dharma wheel. One will then experience the state described therein, a state where emptiness and luminosity are non-dual, a state that is entirely beyond language and thought. This is comparable to the fine taste savored by a mute person, who is unable to express it. Although one may have perfectly comprehended this state, one will find certainly difficult to illustrate it to others through language and concepts.

Because one would know perfectly the taste of this state, one will generate the mind of great bliss. This mind of bliss is not the same as what people experience in everyday life such as receiving a salary or buying candy. The latter types of bliss are actually a kind of false appearance, it is—"Ha, ha, ha!"—a mere laughter from a joke because there still exist several undesirable states in one's mind. In contrast, the mind

of bliss is a genuine pleasure that emanates from one's liberation from the boundless cycle of existence. Because one has destroyed the roots of samsara and attained the state that is entirely beyond the cycle of life and death, one deeply rejoices in it.

At this time, one will be able to clearly see all things with the eyes of wisdom. The enlightened eyes of wisdom are similar to our own eyes, yet they are not physical eyes. As when one reaches the first bhumi of a bodhisattva, the eyes of wisdom can clearly perceive all objects and concentrate at all times on the Buddha's wisdom body, the dharmakaya. Ever absorbed in the joy of the teaching, this body is permeated by the bliss of the teaching.

Many people have gained benefits from the study of the Buddha's teachings. Yet these benefits are not based on simply repeating the related words. Instead, these individuals have experienced, through their own efforts, and in their own mind, the wisdom that the Buddha has spoken about in his discourses in the form of a special, incredible bliss that arises in their hearts, something that is not comparable to any worldly, ordinary bliss.

After we have studied this sublime Buddhadharma, we should vow not to turn back from this path. One of the methods not to turn back is the method explained in the *Extensive Biography of Buddha Shakyamuni*: if one often recites the name of Buddha Shakyamuni, one will not turn back from the bodhisattva path. Among the Buddha's five hundred great vows, the most important vow was not to turn back from the bodhisattva path. In this regard, the Buddha has an uncommon power not found in other buddhas. Therefore, we should, as much as we can, turn our devoted prayers to our fundamental Buddha Shakyamuni, vowing not to turn back from the bodhisattva path. In this way, we will certainly experience the highest and most sublime state of the Buddhadharma.

[VERSE 88]

In this, all things without exception

Are seen in their ultimate state of equality

Having attained the conviction that is beyond expression,

One speaks the inexhaustible treasury of the Dharma.

At this time, you will have realized the state of equality, where all things such as good and evil, happiness and suffering, high and low, rich and poor, are perfectly and infallibly equal, and where there is no discrimination. This is a state beyond thought, where all expressions become ineffable. At this time, one will have also obtained a kind of confidence, or certainty, which cannot be expressed through language. Even though gods, humans, nonhumans, evil spirits, adherents of non-Buddhist religions, or individuals with wrong views, may want to deny or show no consideration for this state of yours, they will do so in vain, for you will have already perfectly awakened to the true nature of all things.

Once you have attained this certainty, you will be able to speak the Buddhadharma to others through all expedient means. The inexhaustible treasury of the Buddhadharma will also naturally emanate from your wisdom with no particular effort. Examples of this are found in the biographies of many Nyingma lineage masters. Although His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche had become advanced in age and he had not been able to read anything for more than a decade, the clarity and richness of his explanations of the scriptures still impressed everyone.

Therefore, when one has attained this state, one will be able to speak the inexhaustible treasury of the Dharma for the benefit of living beings. Through our confidence and the blessings of the lineage masters, as the proper causes and conditions come together, we will achieve this very state and trigger the same wisdom.

[VERSE 89]

***Having mastered the principles of the two truths,
And having seen the inseparable union of the two truths,
One knows that, just like the husk is removed in order to reveal the grain,
All the various methods are expedient means leading to this point.***

At the outset, learn the instructions about ultimate and conventional truths from a qualified teacher, understand in every respect what is the ultimate truth of emptiness and what is the conventional truth of appearances, as well as notions such as the entity and divisions of the two truths. In due course, understand the indivisible union of the two truths, namely, that the ultimate and the conventional truths are indeed mutually compatible and inseparable, with no contradiction. The true nature of appearance is emptiness, and the manifestation of emptiness is appearance. As it is said in the *Heart Sutra*, “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form; form is not other than emptiness; and emptiness is not other than form.” At this time, one understands that, just as the husk is removed in order to reveal the grain, all Dharma practices are performed for the sake of reaching this essence, namely the indivisible union of the two truths.

Once this essence is obtained, as the ultimate and the conventional truths merge perfectly into one entity, all vehicles, paths, and skillful means no longer exist. For this reason, in order to help us understand the indivisible union of the two truths, the Buddha provided the eighty-four thousand teachings; and so, the eighty-four thousand teachings ultimately amount to the indivisible union of the two truths.

In the tantra traditions, the indivisible union of the two truths is called the great equality, whereas in the sutra traditions it is called the indivisible union of appearance and emptiness, and also can be called the single final vehicle. In the *Sutra Requested by Kashyapa*, it is said: “Oh, Kashyapa, there is only one vehicle. If one realizes the

equality of all things, one is Buddha. This is the single vehicle, it is not two or three.” The implication is indeed that the teachings of all vehicles are of a single entity, and as such there are not two, three, or multiple vehicles, any of the latter statements is of provisional meaning.

For this reason, we must know that the different vehicles are all indeed set forth for the sake of attaining Buddhahood, or for the sake of realizing the ultimate truth of the indivisible union of appearances and emptiness. This is comparable to the essential part of the grains that we eat, whereas all the other teachings are for the sake of realizing the single final vehicle. As it is stated in the *Lotus Sutra*, “All innumerable teachings are indeed one vehicle.” The Buddha proclaims a vast number of teachings in accordance with the capacities of different living beings, yet in truth, what they must understand is the single final vehicle. The reasonings concerning the single final vehicle can be found in Maitreya’s *Uttaratantra Shastra*, in Nagarjuna’s *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*, and in Mipham Rinpoche’s *Beacon of Certainty*. Chandrakirti also remarked, “Thus the Buddha taught living beings one unparalleled and undivided vehicle.” In other words, the Buddha has proclaimed a variety of vehicles and each individual teaching for different beings, yet in truth all these teachings and vehicles are undivided, for there is no other vehicle beyond them. Hence, what we must bear in mind is that the single final vehicle is the actual entity of the myriads of teachings.

Therefore, we must rely on the non-dual wisdom instead of conceptual mind. Perhaps, in the capacity of common beings, we are now unable to obtain the wisdom that is perfectly beyond all conceptual elaborations. And yet this very wisdom is the goal that we must pursue.

[VERSE 90]

***Hence, the Buddha knows all expedient means,
And expedient means are called the genuine path.***

***With this in mind, in the teacher and his noble teaching,
An irreversible confidence is generated.***

The compassionate Buddha knows to perfection the faculties, intentions, and lineage of all living beings. Accordingly, he proclaims innumerable teachings to them. Still, all such expedient means are for the sake of making sentient beings understand the ultimate truth of all things, and to eventually lead them to obtain Buddhahood. This is the reason why we call expedient means the genuine path.

In the *Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha set forth the following parable: The mansion of a household caught fire, but while the father promptly escaped the burning house, his children remained inside, grasping to their toys, unwilling to exit. Particularly concerned, the father tricked them, saying that there were sheep carts, deer carts, and ox carts outside, so that the children would leave the mansion. Certain children liked deer carts, others sheep carts, while even others liked ox carts. In this way, all the children successfully left the mansion. The parable illustrated that the vehicle of Hearers, the vehicle of solitary buddhas, and the vehicle of bodhisattvas can all lead beings to liberation. Hence, all expedient means are genuine paths.

One must not say that only the teachings of Vajrayana are correct, and that in the sutra traditions the vehicle of hearers or the vehicle of humans and gods are not genuine. To provide different teachings to living beings of different capacities is in fact the right thing to do. Furthermore, as an alternative example, suppose that there are three remarkable disciples who, perhaps, each individually chose a different master. If one of such disciples happens to choose a master who is not suitable for him, then this master will not be of great benefit to the disciple.

Therefore, the Buddha has spoken different teachings to different beings. In this way, we will reach the understanding that our fundamental teacher Buddha Shakyamuni is the only valid person in the entire world. As stated in the *Extensive*

Biography of Buddha Shakyamuni, in his many births through the cosmic ages, the Buddha has given everything for the sake of living beings, and, eventually, his mental continuum perfectly transformed into the nature of wisdom and compassion. The genuine teaching that the Buddha has spoken is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, and excellent at the end, and it is the course through which living beings attain happiness. Therefore, we must have an irreversible confidence in our fundamental teacher Buddha Shakyamuni and in all the teachings that he has spoken.

There are practitioners among us who, from the depth of their hearts, have generated an irreversible and unshakeable confidence in the Buddha and in the Dharma. If the confidence you have thus generated is truly unshakeable, then in no way will your mind follow evil spirits, non-Buddhists, humans, or non-humans who may use any means to tempt you or deceive you. Even when you are faced with troubles in life or in the course of practice, someone attempts to seduce you into slandering the Buddhadharma, in no way will you blindly follow the opinions of others. Therefore, this certainty is of the utmost importance. In a eulogy to the Buddha, a virtuous master of the past said, “I abandon all other guides and take refuge in you, Buddha, for you are endowed with all virtuous qualities, having gone beyond all faults.” Therefore, if someone genuinely recognizes the Buddha’s meritorious qualities, as well as the sublime qualities of the Dharma, he or she will possess an irreversible confidence.

For example, although I may not be the inventor or maker of a certain object, I may still be knowledgeable about the way it works. If anyone says that such an authentic object is a counterfeit or is a forgery, I will in no way believe this person’s statements. On the other hand, if I am not particularly knowledgeable about this object, I may be confident about it now but there is the chance that after some time, I may no longer be so. Therefore, we must understand by means of reasoning and wisdom the meritorious qualities of the Buddha and those of the Dharma. In this way, as Mipham Rinpoche explains here, we will generate an irreversible confidence.

Certainly, in speaking of a genuinely irreversible confidence, it is the bodhisattvas of the first level and higher who generally possess such an extremely stable confidence. But common beings can have a similarly irreversible confidence also. As for me, I don't have any other realizations or meritorious qualities. Yet still, my confidence in the Buddha and in the Dharma has been irreversible since the time I have generated it. Even if I were cut into pieces, I would certainly feel pain, and perhaps I would yell "Ouch! Ouch!" Yet if in that very moment someone told me, "You should believe that the Buddha is untruthful", I will not believe that as long as I am alive. My confidence in the Buddha is neither blind faith, nor is it a matter of blindly accepting someone else's words. Take, for example, the flavor of candy that one has already tasted. Having known the taste of candy, one will never doubt its sweetness. Similarly, I believe firmly, without the slightest doubt, in the perfect accuracy of the Buddhadharma.

Along the spiritual path, it is very important to generate a genuinely irreversible and unshakeable confidence in Buddha Shakyamuni and in his teachings by means of listening and reflection. This is emphasized by Longchen Rabjam, Mipham Rinpoche, and His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche. I often think about the great kindness of His Holiness. If he had not so often dispensed teachings to us, we would still have confusions in the Buddhadharma today because we are not individuals of sharp faculties. Furthermore, in this modern society that is polluted by the five impurities, individuals struggle to form the correct view and behavior. As a result of the work of the lineage masters, many of us have fortunately gained such a firm confidence.

In terms of practice, many lineage masters have the following requirements: (1) our view should be connected with scriptural authority and with reasoning, that is, our view must be established both by means of scriptural authority and by means of reasoning; (2) our practice should be connected with personal experience, for practice with no experience is useless; (3) our behavior should be connected with time, meaning, for example, that I now have the capacity of a beginner, and so at this time I

must act according to the behavior required for the common vehicle, whereas, on the other hand, if I have attained a state in which none of the four great elements can damage me, or in which I no longer have any attachment, hatred, or ignorance, I can then act according to the behavior of Vajrayana; hence behavior is connected with time.

According to these instructions, we should connect our view with scriptural authority and reasoning at the outset. This is a crucial point. Without a firm foundation based on scriptural authority and reasoning, you may wear the monastic robe and listen to the teachings today and continue for a number of years, however, you may be easily persuaded by teachings from non-Buddhists or from worldly individuals because you have no certainty of your view. That would indeed be very regrettable.

[VERSE 91]

By attaining the supreme non-abiding wisdom,

One is naturally liberated from the extremes of existence and of peace.

And one's great and effortless compassion,

Pervades throughout boundless time and space.

He or she who is endowed with irreversible confidence eventually attains the wisdom that does not abide anywhere. At this time, he or she naturally attains complete liberation from the three realms of existence as well as from the peace of nirvana. As explained in the *Ornament for Clear Realizations*, “Not abiding in the three realms thanks to wisdom, not clinging to nirvana thanks to compassion.” Because one is endowed with transcendent wisdom, one has eliminated entirely the roots of cyclic existence. From then on, one will never be reborn into cyclic existence driven by the power of former actions. And, because one is endowed with the sublime mind of great compassion, one no longer permanently abides, as in the case of certain types of hearers, in the peaceful state of nirvana. At that time, dwelling in an effortless state,

one generates an extremely strong mind of compassion for the living beings who have not yet realized the non-duality of equality and purity, and who are unaware of the indivisible union of appearance and emptiness. Such a great compassion is not constrained by limits in terms of time or space.

For most individuals, expressing the mind of compassion has to meet certain criteria: because I am on good terms with a certain person and when I feel pity for him or her I will have compassion for him or her; if an enemy I hate is in distress, I will think he deserves that suffering and will not have compassion for him; for all the living beings who are suffering, I might have compassion for them sometimes but when I'm not in a good mood, or when I'm particularly busy, I may find them all annoying and will not have compassion for them, even those with whom I am on good terms. In fact, the scope of most of our compassion is quite limited and not universal. Indeed, only the enlightened beings' effortless compassion is pervasive throughout boundless time and space.