THE JEWEL LADDER

A Preliminary Nyingma Lamrīm
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A Preliminary Nyingma Lamrim

by

Minling Terchen Gyurmed Dorjee

Translated and Edited

by

Tsepak Rigzin

LIBRARY OF TIBETAN WORKS AND ARCHIVES
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publisher's Note</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the Author</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I:</strong> The Root Text - The Jewel Ladder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part II:</strong> Commentary/ Introductory Teachings</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminaries of Composing the Text</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualities of an Author</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obeisance</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise to Compose</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminaries of the Actual Text</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive motivation - generation of Mind of Enlightenment</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precepts of the Aspiring Mind of Enlightenment</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precepts of the Venturing Mind of Enlightenment</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlightenment - the six perfections</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfection of Generosity</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfection of Morality</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfection of Patience</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfection of Enthusiastic Perseverence</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfection of Concentration</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfection of Wisdom</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of the Mind of Enlightenment</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive means - generating motivation according</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to secret mantrayana tradition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Faith as a Path</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Aspiration as a Path</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How a Teacher must give a Discourse</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Scopes of person</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Four Common Points</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Difficulty of Finding a Precious Human Rebirth</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing the Freedom and Endowments</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarity of Finding a Precious Human Rebirth</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Precious Human Rebirth</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contemplating Death and Impermanence of Human Rebirth 89
Death is Certain 90
The Time of Death is Uncertain 93
At Death only Dharma is of Benefit 96
Contemplating the Drawbacks of Cyclic Existence 99
The Sufferings of the Three Lower Realms 100
The Sufferings of the Hot Hells 104
The Sufferings of the Cold Hells 109
The Sufferings of the Neighbouring hells 112
The Sufferings of Occasional hells 116
The Sufferings of the Hungry Ghosts 119
The Sufferings of the Animals 123
The Sufferings of the Higher Realms 127
The Nature of the three types of Sufferings 138
Contemplating the Law of Cause and Effect 138
The General Contemplation of Cause and Effect 139
The Specific Contemplation of Cause and Effect 143
Transforming the Unspecified Karmas into Virtues 159
A Summary of the Four Noble Truths 163
The Truth of Origin of Suffering 166
The Truth of Suffering 170
The Truth of Path 173
The Truth of Cessation 178
Concluding Remarks on the Four Noble Truths 180
Taking Refuge 183
Footnotes 188

Part III
Guide to the Nyingma Lamrim
(Kun-bzang bla-ma'i zhal-lung) 197

Part IV
Guide to the Nyingma Lamrim - Tibetan text 213
We have great pleasure in publishing *The Jewel Ladder*, a short and comprehensive Nyingma Lamrim for beginners by Minling Terchen Gyurme Dorjee (1643-1714), commonly known as Terdak Lingpa, one of the foremost early master-scholars of Tibet, who was both a teacher and disciple of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama.

This particular text was chosen and taught by Ven. Garje Khamtrul Rinpoche during his six-week teaching programme at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, in 1987.

The content of the text introduces us to the preliminaries of the Buddhist practice required for higher spiritual development, such as the four basic ways of concentrating one's mind on the Dharma and the Four Noble Truths. Khamtrul Rinpoche's commentary unravels the gist of this short and pithy text making it into a language easy to understand and digest by common people who are looking for such a manual. Included at the end of the book is a guide to the Nyingma Lamrim (*Kun-bzang bla-ma'i zhal-lung*) both in English and original Tibetan.

We are thankful to Rinpoche for sparing his time and for giving this excellent teaching and to Mr. Tsepak Rigzin of the Translation Department of LTWA, for his translation, editing and for bringing this book to completion. We hope this will be of great help to students, scholars and practitioners.

Gyatsho Tshering
Director

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Minling Terchen Gyurmed Dorjee, also known as Terdak Lingpa or Pedma Garwang Gyurmed Dorjee was born in the year 1646 at Dargye Choling monastery in Dranang, Central Tibet, to Sangdag Trinley Lhundup and Ladzin Yangchen Dolma amidst auspicious omens of the witnessing of earthquakes and rainbows. Both of his parents were very spiritual, and particularly his father was a great tantric adept. Just before he was born, his father dreamt of a red naked lady who offered him a handful of red RHI mantric syllable and his mother saw the belle of her village making an offering of a crystal stupa of one arms length. He was named Kunga Ngodup Rinchen Wangi Gyalpo.

As a child, he was quite unusual boy. While playing with other children he acted as if he were a teacher giving sermons and made his mates listen to him; at times he made stupas, images and offering article out of clay moulds and sometimes stayed all alone meditating and chanting lines of prayers. He began receiving his religious trainings when he was just four years of age under the guidance of his father, who first initiated him into the Kagyad Sangdzog (bKa-brgyad gsang-rdzogs) empowerment. The great scholar, Dhondup Wangyal, was his teacher who taught him reading, writing, grammar and literature. His others teachers at that age were Rigzin Pema Trinley, Gonpo Sonam Chogden and Lochen Zhenphnan Dorjee from whom he also received oral transmissions and initiations. Surprisingly even at that early age he showed remarkable signs of success in his trainings.

When he was nine, he took lay ordination vows upholding the precepts of the refuge (skYabs-gsum 'dzin-pa'i dge-bsnyen) from his father and received further trainings in meditation, rituals and rites of the Nyingma practices with particular emphasis on Dzogchen philosophy and meditation. Then he entered into a three month meditative retreat and received visions of Guru Padmasambhava giving initiations to him. Once when he was in his retreat in Sangphug cave, he envisioned all of Tibet within a beam of light and after he scrutinized it, he saw all the worldly activities of his town.
When he penetrated further into this nature, he experienced that all his visions had turned into an inconceivable divine mansion deep blue in colour amidst which appeared Vajrasattva whose body had all the major and minor marks of a fully enlightened Buddha flanked by a red and white goddess on both sides holding a violin and flute, and then he heard the goddess singing:

The Buddhas in the Akanista Budha field enjoys uncontaminated nectar;
The gods in the Tushita relished immortal nectar;
And humans of this world sip intoxicating nectar;
Though these tastes distinctly have a single nature.
When Akshobhya Vajra relishes this;
His energy and wisdom are reawakened.
Oh! How wonderful is this.

Then his visions vanished and transformed into a huge radiant white A syllable and this further dissolved into a tiny drop of light to the size of a sesame seed and this then dissolved into his third eye. According to his own description, the whole experience took about half a day. All of this symbolised his profound understanding of seeing all worldly and transworldly phenomena as being illusory in their nature.

Whilst in retreat periodically he memorised the traditional texts concerning invocation rites of the dharma protectors, sadhanas of the Avalokiteshvara, Amitayus, Mahakala, Guru Padmasambhava, Vajrapani, consecration rites and fire pujas without any difficulty. He also learnt by heart the fundamental texts and commentaries of the Essential Root Tantra (rTsa-rgyud gsang-ba snying-po), the Peerless Continuum (rGyudbla-ma), the Relaxation of Mind Nature (Sems-nyid ngal-gso), the Wish Granting Treasure (Yid-bzhin-mdzod) and the Four Medicine Tantras (sMan-dpyad rgyud-bzhi) and others. Thus showed an inconceivable advancement difficult for ordinary people to understand. Between the age of fifteen and early twenties, he received the oral transmission of the eighteen volumes of Nyingma Tantra (rNying-ma rgyud-bum bco-brgyad) at Tashi Choling monastery. And, later he also received teachings on the Treatise on
Mani Mantra (Ma-ni bk’a-bum), the Seventeen Tantras (rGyud-bcu-bdun), the Khro-ma Tantras (Khros-ma’i rgyud), the Heart Teachings of Vimalamitra (Bi-ma snying-thig), the Quintessential Teachings of the Dakinis (mKh’a-gro yang-thig), the Vajramala Initiations (rDor-phreng-gi dbang), the Pronouncement (bK’a-ma) and the Treasure Teachings (gTer-ma) and innumerable others.

At the age of twenty three he met the great Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Tenzin Gyatso at Drepung and received the hair cutting ceremony and was given the name Ngawajng Pema Tenzin. Later at the advice of his father, he took the vows of a full fledged layman (Yongs-rdzogs dge-bsnyen) of the Pratimoksha, Bodhisattva and Tantric tradition. This coincided with the bringing of the self-arisen image of Arya Avalokiteshvara at Kyirong to the palace of the Dalai Lama and was recognised as an auspicious sign. As Zurchen Kunkhyen Choying Rangdrol remarked, "This is an auspicious omen and he will certainly become a great master helping the spread of Buddhism." The Fifth Dalai Lama also took this as an auspicious sign and offered a special hat made out of fine brocade to Terdak Lingpa. Following this, he received transmissions and teachings from the Fifth Dalai Lama. Of particular importance was the transmission of the Great Sealed Secrets (gSang-ba rgya-can) cycle of teachings, comprised of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s visionary texts, treasure teachings and supplementary notes of extremely secret levels of practices. He then travelled back and forth between Gungthang, Benyul, Nyemo and Kyitsal monasteries and studied scriptures and meditation. These included the Great Illusion Tantra (sGyu-phrul), the Union Tantra (mNyang-sbyor), the Vajra Kila (Phur-pa), the Yamri Tantra (gShed-skor), the Sublime, Complete and Heart (Bla-dzogs thugs-gsum) treatises on the meditation level (sGrub-sde) class of teachings; and also the tantras such as the Hundred Sadhanas (sGrub-thabs brgya-rtsa), Cakra Sambhara (dDe-mchog), Guhyasamaja (gSang-dus), Hevajra (dGyes-rdor) and many more. He also studied the texts of scholars - Sakya Pandita, Rongzom, and in particular, the texts of the great all-knowing Longchen Ramjampa.

Of his teachers he had three were incomparable in their kindness; eleven from whom he had received nectar-like teachings for self emanation and growth; and twenty-five as the source of his extensive
visions from whom he had received miscellaneous teachings. The first three were the great Fifth Dalai Lama, Sangdak Trinley Lhundrup - his father and Sungtrul Tsonphunt Dorje. Amongst the eleven, to mention a few, these were Rigzin Pema Trinley, Zhalu Rinchen Sonam Chodrup, Zur Ngawang Phuntsok, Trulzhig Longyang Odsal, Sakyapa Sonam Wangchuk, and Konchog Lhundrup and others. Especially, the great Fifth Dalai Lama and his own father, Sangdak Trinley Lhundrup, were principal teachers from whom he had directly attained higher accomplishments (siddhi). In all he had around thirty-five teachers from whom he had received oral transmissions, teachings and profound techniques of meditation and ritual practice.

After all this intensive study he went into solitary retreat for one year and ten days. During this, he experienced himself as actually arising in the form of deities like Vajra Kila, and also received visions of innumerable Indian and Tibetan masters such as Padmasambhava, Vimala Mitra, Vairocana, Khadro Yeshi Tsogyal, Nyangral Nyima Odzer and Kunkhyen Choje. In his visions he was bestowed essential instructions and pronouncements where he would be responsible for finding treasure article, objects and scriptures. It was during this retreat that he unearthed many treasure texts, articles, sacred pills and images. He took out the text Rig-'dzin thugs-tig from Yama Lung, and later he obtained the text gShin-rje-gshed gregs-'joms from Shel Drag and also the cycle of Thugs-rje chen-po bde-gshegs kun-'dus. When he took out these concealed texts people around him witnessed many miracles. As soon as he came out of this retreat, he then went into meditation combining the Mahamudra and Dzogchen practices. At one point when he was giving some esoteric initiations and teachings to the Fifth Dalai Lama at Potala, to everyone's surprise, flowers actually fell from heaven.

When he was twenty-four, he passed the transmissions of the tantra of Vajrapani's Whispered lineage (Phyag-rdor snyan-brgyud), the Seven Treasury Texts (mDzod-bdu) of Longche Rabjampa, the Triple Relaxation (Ngal-gso skor-gsum), the Profound Quintessential Droplet (Zab-mo yang-thig), and the treasure teachings of Padma Lingpa, Dorje Lingpa, Ratna Lingpa and around two hundred major initiations to the Fifth Dalai Lama. In this way, a strong spiritual tie was developed between Terdak Lingpa and the Fifth Dalai Lama. In
the following year, on the 10th of the fourth Tibetan month the Fifth Dalai Lama fully patronised the building of Minling Rinpoche's personal monastery and gave it the name Ogmin Ogyan Mindol Ling Ngedon Gatsal, which took seven years to complete. On the same day monks took refuge vows from the Dalai Lama and who also performed a hair cutting ceremony for the new monks. In the subsequent year when the Dalai Lama fell sick, Terdak Lingpa performed grand religious services and rituals to expel the hinderances, and because of his power of ritual the Dalai Lama was fully recovered. Later at a meeting Terdak Lingpa is said to have given many secret advices to the Dalai Lama. When all his activities were thriving, at thirty-three Terdak Lingpa became seriously ill and as per the prediction and instruction of the Dalai Lama, he accepted a spiritual messenger (consort). This not only enhanced his own tantric realisations more deeply but also proved beneficial to his disciples and the doctrine. Though this consort did not bear a child, later another consort gave birth to a child, who became a great practitioner.

During the three consecutive years he travelled extensively to many places in the region of central Tibet and implanted the seed of dharma in the hearts of countless people. When the Fifth Dalai Lama passed away on the 25th of 2nd Tibetan month he was appointed a member of the team of officials responsible for keeping the death of the Dalai Lama secret. Saddened at the death of his teacher and closest disciple, he made huge offerings and prayers for his quick return and also made a grand donation of gold, silver, precious stones and article to build tomb for the preservation of the Dalai Lama's body.

Terdak Lingpa was known for his generosity. Whatever material offerings he collected from his faithful disciples were all generously donated to Mindrol Ling monastery. Because of his donations, the three hundred monks at Mindrol Ling did not lack anything. Further, he made many blocks for printing scriptures and books, and moulded figures of various Buddhist deities. After Terdak Lingpa has done all these meritorious deeds in the Wood-Horse year, during the first month of 1714, when he was nearing sixty-eight, he fell ill, and after leaving proper instructions, advices and prophecies passed away on
the 2nd of the 2nd Tibetan month. That morning he first said: "It is necessary to go seven steps to the east!" and then spoke this verse:

All appearance, sound and intrinsic awareness arising in the form of deities, mantras and the Dharmakaya Has intermingled into the realm of the body and wisdom. May this profound experience of secret nature of a great Yogi Become inseparably one in taste and essence with his heart-centre.

Suddenly, his hands performed the gesture of beating the hand drum and ringing the bell, and his eyes were wide open. In this way, the Dakinis invited him to the pure realm of Buddha. The disciples assembled there in agony witnessed the smell of camphor in the surrounding and heard the sounds of bells and hand drum.

Amongst his disciples, the great Fifth Dalai Lama and Desi Sangye Gyatso were his foremost disciples and patrons, like the sun and moon. Rigzin Pema Trinley, Sakya Trichen Kunga Tashi, Tsurphu Gyaltsab Rinpoche, Drigung Kunchok Trinley Zangpo, Taglung Tenzing Sizhi Namgyal Rinpoche, Dzogchen Rinpoche Gyurme Theckchok Tenzin and innumerable other great masters also became his disciples and tasted the nectar of teachings from his wisdom. Besides countless people in U-Tsang, Kham, Dagpo, Kongpo and Ngari regions of Tibet had the fortune of contenting themselves with the teachings of Terdag Lingpa. A prophecy in the Treasure Teachings has it that three rulers will support him. Thirty-eight disciples will deliver themselves. Two thousand will be attached to his teachings and sixty-seven will carry out his activities.

Treatises authored, compiled and edited by him in all constitute more than thirty volumes, and these may be classified into those belonging to the Pronouncements of the Early Translation (sNga-'gyur bk'a-ma'i skor); the Mind Treasure Texts of the New Translation (gTer-gsar thugs-thig skor); the Instructions and Advices (bSlab-byar zhal-gdams-kyi skor); and the Common Studies (Thun-mongs phyili gnas-kyi skor) comprising of poetry, rejoinders, personal notes, short prayers and autobiographies. This text of translation - the Jewel Ladder - a preliminary instructions to the commoners itself do not
carry any information concerning the time, location and at whose request this has been written. Besides, my attempt at locating any information from the existing autobiographies and contemporary writings proved a failure in this context. I suspect that the time and events leading to all his writings could not be mentioned in his autobiography. Above all, this text being one of his minor writings, perhaps he purposely chose not to mention where and when he compiled it. In any case, this should not give rise to any doubt regarding Terdak Lingpa's authorship of the text because one finds this listed in Rinchen Terdzod compiled by Kongtrul Yonten Gyatso (1813-1899) among the writings of Minling Terchen Gyurmed Dorjee and also the caption of the text as well mentions: "...sNyoms-las-pa 'gyur-med dorjes yi-ger-spel ba-'o", which means, this has been written by the lazy Gyurmed Dorjee. As such we can perhaps speculate and say that this lamrim text belongs to the category of instructions and advices certainly written at the behest of some of his disciples. Nevertheless, the text besides being short is clear belonging to the literary genre of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama's time useful for beginners of the present generation.
References


Acknowledgement

This book would never have been conceived without the kind teachings of Ven. Khamtrul Rinpoche, and I am deeply indebted to him for revealing the secrets of his hidden wisdom. Thanks are due to Ani Ursula Sollmann for her laborious and painstaking transcription of Rinpoche's teachings; Prof. Dexter M. Roberts for his generous editorial assistance; Ku-ngo Gyatsho Tshering, Tashi Tsering and Ven. Tenzin Dorjee for their encouragement; and lastly to T. Dhendup and Norbu Chophel for computer-setting and making the manuscript camera-ready.
PART I

THE ROOT TEXT
This is a Preliminary Discourse for Commoners called
The Jewel Ladder.

Om Svasti!

Obeisance to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

I make prostration to my Guru, the entity of Three Jewels
The bestowal of all energy, benefit and happiness.
Being immutable from the sphere of peace and great bliss,
You display an infinite multitude dance of illusion.

I shall hereby elucidate the stages of the path
Of the Jewel Ladder in order that the fortunate ones
Travel quickly and blissfully
Into the Supreme City of Thorough Liberation.

Generally speaking, in order that the reality of the minds of all
sentient beings, which exists as Buddhas, to become manifest, there
are two ways of entering the paths:

1. How a person of lower calibre enters (into practice) in reliance
   upon the gradual path of hearing, contemplation and meditation.

2. How a person of superior calibre enters (into practice) through
   the path of faith, devotion and leap over.

These two systems exist in both Sūtra and Tantra traditions.
According to the first, it is to train oneself in the cultivation of
three interests in reliance upon the lack of three attachments.

i) Through contemplating the rarity of finding a human rebirth
   endowed with freedoms and endowments, and its being
   impermanent, attachment towards this life is released, and
   consequently a natural interest in obtaining the joys of higher
rebirth in the future lives is generated.

ii) Through contemplating the sufferings of cyclic existence and the causality, attachment towards *samsara* is released, and consequently a genuine interest in seeking definite goodness, (the state of liberation and enlightenment), the path of individual emancipation is generated.

iii) Through contemplating love, compassion and the mind of enlightenment, attachment towards one's own selfish ends is released, and consequently a natural interest in achieving enlightenment for the sake of others is generated.

Thus meditating upon the above paths of the three persons until the time you are able to experience a transformation of your mind becomes the foundation of all spiritual practices. Without having produced these three within one's mental continuum what you do, such as meditation on deity and chanting of mantras will lead to nowhere. Therefore, you must know the order of your practices in the following manner:

I. Contemplating the rarity of finding a human rebirth endowed with freedoms and endowments
II. Contemplating death and impermanence
III. Contemplating the faults of cyclic existence
IV. Contemplating the law of causality

I. Contemplating the Rarity of Finding a Human Rebirth

This has three divisions:

a. Recognition of the freedoms and endowments
b. The difficulty of finding freedoms and endowments
c. Contemplating their significance
Recognition of the freedoms and endowments

We must strive in seeking the means of not taking rebirth in this cyclic existence which is difficult to endure. Such a rebirth can be achieved only upon this body of freedoms and endowments, which is extremely difficult to find, but this time alone. Therefore, realizing this one must generate a wholehearted interest thinking, "Today, I shall try by all means to extract essence out of this." As it is said in Astasāhstrikaṁahāṭika:

To be born as a hell, hungry ghost, animal, Barbarian, long-living god, holder of wrong view, In places devoid of Buddhas and as a fool Are the eight bondages to freedoms.

If one is born in the three lower realms, the suffering is intense, and because the rebirth is extremely inferior, there is no opportunity to carry out spiritual practices. The gods of the desire realm have weak repentance due to their distraction towards sensual objects; and because most of the gods within form and formless realm are constantly intoxicated with their meditative concentration, they lack opportunity to carry out spiritual practices.

Those born in the world realms where Buddhas have not appeared or in places which are devoid of Buddhas; or those born in remote barbaric lands where Buddhism did not flourish even though Buddhas have made their presence; or those who, even though are born in places where Buddhism flourishes but profess wrong views denying the existence of past and future lives, law of causality and the Three Jewels; and those who are deaf and dumb thus lacking any wisdom to discriminate those to be cultivated and abandoned constitute the remainder of eight bondages of freedoms. Among these, to be born as a being in any of the three lower realms and as a long-living god are the four non-human bondages, and the other four are the bondages of a human being. However, according to some explanation, the gods with bondages here has reference only to gods without discrimination. Hence, lack of the eight bondages constitute the freedoms. As the Akāṣatratna sūtra says:
The Bodhisattva Ākāśagarva asked,
O Tathagata, How shall I recognize the freedoms and endowments? The Tathagata replied, when the mind is disturbed and distracted by extraneous thoughts, it is called busy, but when conceptualizations are pacified and the mind abides in its natural form it is called freedom.

The Samudanana sutra says:

He who has overcome the eight bondages shall always find freedom.

Of the ten endowments, the five personal endowments are:

To be born as a human, in a central land, possessing complete sense organs, not having committed an extreme activity, and having faith in the object (moral principles).

Thus, in general, we have obtained this human rebirth; and in particular, we are born in a central land, a place where Buddhism flourishes; we have the five senses complete, thus enabling us to understand those to be cultivated and abandoned; we have neither committed an act without respite nor have caused others to do so; and have faith in the moral principles, the source of all worldly and transworldly wholesome qualities, i.e., we have faith also in the teachings of Buddha. Since these five conditions associated with one's mental continuum facilitate the spiritual practice, these are known as the five personal endowments. Freedom from eight bondages and the five personal endowments are essentially the same. The five circumstantial endowments are as follows. It is said:

Buddhas having come and taught the Dharma.
The flourishing of his teachings and the existence of his followers, and compassionate feeling for others.

Hence, these are the facts that Buddha has come to the world; has taught the sublime dharma; his teachings survives without
diminishment; there are many others who follow his teachings: and there are many who provide the necessities like food and clothing with compassionate feeling to those practicing dharma.

There are, however, those who explain that the compassionate feeling for others here refers only to the teachings given by a spiritual mentor with sympathy. Because the above five conditions are associated with the mental continuum of others and facilitate the practice of Dharma, these are known as the five circumstantial endowments.

As the Sutra says:

Endowment is understanding of the nature of mind and directing the mind to its perfect meaning.

Therefore, according to this, the freedoms are the foundation and the endowments are features that qualify the freedoms. Because this human rebirth endowed with eighteen qualities of freedoms and endowments is extremely difficult to find, realizing this, one must think wholeheartedly, "Today I must make efforts in carrying out spiritual practices."

A guide to Bodhisattva's Way of Life says:

When having found freedoms such as this,
If I do not attune myself to what is wholesome,
There could be no greater deception
And there could be no greater fool.

The difficulty of finding freedoms and endowments

Amongst the sentient beings, it is said that those in the three lower realms are extremely numerous, as infinite as the number of dust particles on this great earth, and those of the higher realms are very few like the dust particles contained on a finger nail. Within the beings of the three lower realms, animals are fewest, and the majority of them, who live in the great oceans, are inconceivable, and those
scattered throughout the world alone are sufficient to fill the whole earth, mountains, rivers and space. However, compared to the animal world, gods and human beings become a mere example of existence; within this, in general, human beings are fewer, and in particular human beings of this world are still fewer, and still to find a human rebirth attuned to dharna is nearly impossible. Even so, amongst them those who commit non-virtues are quite many, even infinite, and those who commit virtues are very few; still among them those who observe morality capable of ensuring human rebirth are extremely rare. Therefore, to find a human rebirth is extremely difficult. The Madhyamakavatara says:

The cause of higher rebirth is morality and no other.

This shows that the cause for higher rebirth is certainly morality alone. Lord Nagarjuna has illustrated the rarity of finding precious human rebirth in the following verse which states:

Since attaining human rebirth after animal
Is more difficult than for a turtle to insert its neck
Into a hole of a yoke in the ocean,
O, King, make this a life fruitful
Through practising the holy doctrine.

Using this as an example, one must, realizing that in general to find a human rebirth is difficult, and in particular, finding such a human rebirth attuned to dharna being the result of having accumulated enormous meritorious collections, think: "Today, when I have found this excellent rebirth, which is rare to find, in order to obtain ultimate peace, I shall carry out a pure spiritual practice by all means."

*Contemplating the significance of finding a human rebirth*

If you wonder what is the purpose of obtaining a human rebirth, extremely difficult to find, it is extremely beneficial, because temporarily it is upon this rebirth that the joys of higher realms,
body, wealth and all the marvels can be easily obtained life after life. Not only this, but one can also achieve *Nirvana* of the initial vehicle (Hinayana) and the unsurpassable enlightenment (Buddhahood). If you do not obtain such a human rebirth, let alone attaining the state of liberation, there is no means even to find the joys of cyclic existence. Therefore, today if you do not work to extract essence out of this rebirth of freedoms and endowments, it would be a great loss and disappointment for you like a person returning empty handed from a jewel island.

*A Guide to Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

Relying upon the boat of a human (body),  
Free yourself from the great river of pain!  
As it is hard to find this boat again,  
This is no time for sleep, you fool.

This rebirth, found but once only, upon which your supreme wishes can be fulfilled has been excessively wasted in the past; however, being mindful of this from the depth of your heart, think, "From now onwards I shall devote wholeheartedly to the practice of sublime dharma," and do not to let this rebirth of freedoms and endowments become meaningless.

II. Contemplating Death and Impermanence

Although all of us think that death will come, we still have hope of not dying for sometime, which is present in us even at the brink of death. Because we are obstructed by this wrong idea and are immersed in the distractions of this life and laziness of procrastination against seeking the fulfillment of future lives, we must meditate on impermanence, which has three points:

a. Contemplating death as imminent  
b. Contemplating the uncertainty of death  
c. Contemplating that nothing is of benefit at death
Contemplating death as imminent

Once having obtained this rebirth of freedoms and endowments, if we do not die, then it is a different matter; however, there is least validity of its permanence. No matter whatever form of rebirth we take, and place or company we rely on, death is inescapable. All wandering beings that have existed in the past, that would come into being in the future and those that are presently existing, for all, death is inescapable. In brief, ever since we were born, until today, how many of our enemies, friends and neutral beings have died? What confidence do we have for not dying.

As the Sutra says:

All those that have existed and would exist, must migrate by leaving this body, the realizing them all as transitory and those dwelling in dharma must certainly practice.

Asvagosa has also said:

Have you ever seen, or heard about or even doubted that someone on this earth or above had survived death, after death?

Furthermore;

Wherever you go, nowhere can be found a place, Where death is insusceptible, Neither in the space nor deep in the ocean; Or even if you hide in the hearts of mountains.

Therefore, in general, death is inescapable. Nevertheless, it is possible that you might live long; yet as every year, month, day and meal-time passes away and it takes us closer to death; many have died that way in the past and our remaining life span will also diminish steadily without increment.

It is said in Lalitavistara Sutra:
The three states of existence are impermanent, like an autumn cloud.
The life of creatures passes like a waterfall down the steep mountain.
The life of migrators passes like lightning in the sky.
It goes rapidly, like a waterfall down a steep mountain.

Similarly, *A Guide to Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

> Remaining neither day or night,
> Life is always slipping by
> And never getting any longer,
> Why will death not come to one like me?

Therefore, at the early youthful days of our life, due to lack of interest, we did not do any spiritual practice; finally, when we become old, even though we may wish to do dharma practice, due to weakness of our physical and mental strength, no constructive result could be gained. By then half of our life will have been wasted in sleep. Furthermore, we are being carried away by distractions and many insignificant activities of wandering and sitting etc. Consequently, whatever little time is now available at our disposal for carrying out dharma practices, understanding all marvels and allurements of this life like a joyous session of a dream, make strong efforts in practising the sublime dharma.

*Contemplating the uncertainty of death*

If you think, although I shall finally die but why should I remain too concerned, for I am not going to die temporarily, generally speaking, except for the human beings of Uttarkuru (*sgra-mi-snyan*), continent the life of others is uncertain, and in particular, the life of human beings of this world is extremely uncertain. No doubt, originally the life-span of the human beings of this world was infinite; ultimately their maximum life-span would be only ten years. This being so, yet we cannot recount the time of death of any person old, young and middling. This is said in the *Abhidharmakosa*:
As of now, it is uncertain, and finally
It would be ten, though initially was infinite.

Given that, due to one's good karma of the past, one could possibly live between sixty to seventy years, but this cannot be counted from today onwards. How much of this has already been spent in the past, and for how long are you going to live? We cannot ascertain this. Also, it might be possible that the karma propels you to live only thirty or forty years. Because if you take into account the sudden death of many we see and hear about, we could certainly think of ourselves being a perfect example of a similar situation. Just as the Omniscient Choje has said:

This life is impermanent like a clay pot,
One is never sure, which of
The two, the experiences of
Tomorrow or next life will come first.
Therefore, right from today practice the sublime doctrine.

Since we do not know which of these - tomorrow or the day after, or our next life-would come first, we must try to completely sever attachment towards all activities of this life.

Nagarjuna said:

When the earth, Meru, the oceans, and the seven suns,
Are to be consumed by the blazing flame
Leaving not even dust. What need is there
To speak of such a frail thing as the human body?

This human body is as feeble as water-bubbles, our breath is always as unpredictable as the autumn clouds, and this unfree mind is not sure where is it travelling. Therefore, it has been said:

Thinking, "I won't die at least today,"
It is improper to stay delighted."
Nagarjuna has also said:

The conditions for death are many
And those of survival are few
Even the latter are conditions for death
Therefore, always practice the dharma.

There are many causes of death, the external condition such as harms caused by humans beings, animals, evil spirits; the natural catastrophes caused by fire, water and mountain-steep; and the internal conditions caused by four hundred and twenty four ailments. In brief, there is not anything that cannot cause death. Even our reliance on basic necessities such as food, clothing and medicines required for our survival may transform into conditions and causes of our death. Therefore, as we stay amidst storms of evil conditions and we are never sure of the time of our death, thinking, "the time of death is uncertain," practice meditation.

Phadampa Sangye has said:

O Dingri people! enwrapped in distraction,
You will be seized by the lord of death
Therefore, start practising right now.

*Contemplating that nothing but dharma is of benefit at death*

When the time for death comes, no matter how much wealth you may have accumulated, you have no freedom to carry it, nor even your body of flesh and bone with which you were born. You must leave them behind. You have no freedom to enjoy the company of your spiritual friends, relatives, beloved attendants and servants who may be around you. Even though the walls of your house may be strong, you cannot hang onto it or have freedom to live in it, but have to discard all your belongings of this life and migrate towards directions unknown to you. Neither food, wealth, strength, mantras nor can any coincidence avoid death.
It is said in the Sutra

O great king!
Sickness destroys healthy body,
Old age destroys youth,
Degeneration destroys excellence,
Death destroys life;
However, these cannot be easily avoided
Through a quick escape, deception by wealth,
Material, mantras and medicine.

Shantideva has also said:

When seized by the messengers of death,
What benefit will friends and relatives afford?

If the above factors do not decide our course, you might ask what are the other factors that can decide our destination? It is the virtuous and non-virtuous karmas accumulated by us that we must follow:

The Sutra Instructed to a King says:

When it is time for the king to die,
His resources, friends and teachers shall not follow him
But wherever shall a person migrates
His karma will follow him like the shadow of his own.

Therefore, understanding all transitory nature of the world outside and its inhabitants as signalling impermanence to oneself, it is important to realise all activities of this life as having no end and being insignificant, that it is only the sublime doctrine that is of continual benefit from the time of death, and think, "right from now I shall strive to carry out spiritual practices."

Nagarjuna has said:

Even if one's head or clothing should suddenly catch fire
He should forgo extinguishing it
And exert himself in putting an end to rebirth
For no aim is more exalted than that.

Phadampa Sangye said:

O the people of Dingri!
As soon as you recollect
That you have not turned to spiritual practice
Even after having completed your busy periods
Then you must rush to do so.

III. Contemplating the Faults of Cyclic Existence

This has three division:

a. Contemplating the sufferings of the three lower realms
b. Contemplating the sufferings of the higher realms
c. Contemplating the nature of the three sufferings in general

Contemplating the sufferings of the three lower realms

Think, "because death is certain, we have no freedom to live throughout this life, (for ever); death is not the end; we must certainly take rebirth, that too, either as a happy or an unfortunate being, of which we have no choice but must follow the projection of one's positive or negative karma. I may have also accumulated numerous non-virtuous activities, and if I were to be born in the lower realms, how much suffering I must undergo."

Just as Lord Nagarjuna has said:

Reflect each day
The hot and cold hells
So also the long duration of thirst and hunger
Of the hungry ghosts.
Sufferings of the ignorant are many
Reflect upon them by watching the stupid beings
Avoid their cause and cultivate cause for happiness.

First, contemplating the sufferings of the hells has four:

Contemplating the sufferings of the hot hells

Environment

It has burning iron ground with huge mountain and gauges always shooting fire-flames about the length of a handsapn. Molten copper and acids drench, and the burning iron forest blazes. The surrounding is filled with malignant birds, wild animals, hell-guardians and malicious butchers. The burning iron walls cause a raging holocaust of fire throughout all directions. It is explained that fire in the hell realm is hotter than the fire at the end of an aeon, and it becomes four times hotter at each subsequent hell realm below.

The intermediate beings to be born in those hell realms receive experiences of intense cold as if being driven away by torrential rain, and thereafter are reborn as hot hells. Knowing that it is warmer over there in the hot hell realms they run towards it with craving and suddenly take rebirth like awaking from sleep. Further, because their sensation is quick, and body smooth and delicate, this also makes both their body and mind not only weak to resist the pains, but aggravates their suffering.

Sufferings

1. First concerns the "reviving" hell beings. Due to their past karma they held various weapons in their hands; out of strong hatred-anger they consider each other as their enemies and attack one another to faint and fall. At such point, either a voice is heard from the sky calling "revive again" or due to cold wind blowing they regain their life, and once again experience intense suffering until their karma is finished.

2. The guardians of the hell draw four or eight lines on the bodies
of the "black line" hell beings (with hot pokers), then their flesh is cut with saws and sliced with axes etc. along these lines. The suffering is endless.

3. When the "mass crushing" hell beings physically gather at once, the guardians of the hell drive them into mountains resembling goat, sheep, tiger and lion etc., and they are crushed in between those mountains. Blood shoots out from all orifices, then again when they gather together, they are pounded like sesame seeds with huge hammers; burning iron rocks roll down like shower of rain and torture them. Such is their suffering.

4. The "crying" hell beings search out for places of dwelling in dismay and find metal houses, but as soon as they enter these houses immediately the doors are locked and catch fire in and out, in which they are burnt. Consequently they cry and wail to seek refuge but suffer from not finding one.

5. The nature of sufferings of the "great crying" hell beings is similar to that of the previous hells, but here the metal houses have double walls where they are being burnt and experience intense suffering.

6. The "hot" hell beings are roasted like fishes in a large iron-cauldron, which measures many Yojanas. Hot and burning iron bars are violently driven from their anus through crown which burns all their internal organs: consequently flames shoot out throughout all orifices and pores of their body. The hell beings are then laid down on the hot burning iron grounds and are beaten by burning hammers.

7. Burning-hot tridents are driven into the bodies of the "extremely hot" hell beings through their anus and up through the crown and two shoulders blazing all orifices. Then their bodies are enwrapped with burning metal sheets and are cooked like rice up to their crown in boiling acid for softening iron and copper. When only the skeleton of their body is left the hell beings are again laid
down upon iron ground to regain flesh and blood, only to be cooked again.

8. Throughout all directions, the raging fire produced from the burning hot iron ground consumes the body of “the hells without respite” through their skin, flesh, sinews, bones up to the level of marrow becoming indistinguishable from the fire, like the flame of a butter lamp. It is only through their cries of mourning that they could manifest their existence as beings. Then the hell beings are roasted in the sparkling iron filing; forced to climb up and down the huge burning iron mountains; their tongues are laid out on burning iron ground and nailed down; then by skinning out their body, they are laid down flat and upturned on the burning iron ground, then by opening their mouth widely, red hot iron balls and molten copper liquid are poured into their mouth, which burn and flush down their mouth, throat and all internal organs through the lower part of body. Such is their unbearable suffering.

Duration of Life

Abhidharmakosa says:

Fifty human years is a single day
For the lowest of the desire gods.
As such their life-span is five hundred years.
That of the higher regions increase by twice as much.
And a single day of the first six hells
Such as the reviving, in their respective
Order is equal to the life-span of the desire gods.

Accordingly, fifty human years is the duration of a single day of the four great kings (in the desire realm); as such their life-span is fifty years, which is equivalent to one day of the reviving hell and as such the life-span of reviving hell is five hundred years.

In each realm below, the number of years as well the number of days increases twice as much, as such you should understand that (the duration of life) in each subsequent hell is quadruple compared to
that of its predecessors.

**Contemplating the sufferings of cold hells**

**Environment**

There is no light of the sun, moon, and others. The surrounding is filled with darkness, snow and glaciers. Freezing wind and storm blow constantly, the sound of which resembles the nature of their bodily pains and the wailing. It is said that the intensity of suffering of cold in each subsequent hell realm below is seven times greater than the preceding hell realm. The intermediate beings to be born in those hell realms receive experience as if they are being burnt in the fire, and encounter cold hell realm. Consequently they take rebirth into it, due to the generation of craving.

**Sufferings**

1. The "blistering" (goose-pimples) hell beings are enwrapped in cold wind and storms due to which their body shrivels covered with goose pimples. Such is their sufferings.

2. The "bursting blister" hell beings suffer extreme intensity of cold due to which even the blisters of their bodies break out (into sores) which are infested with worms with sharp iron beaks that tear away the sores so much so that even the blood and pus dripping down from these turn into ice. Such is the nature of their suffering.

3. The so called "achu" calling hell beings are only able to utter a moaning sound, "achu" at a very low ebb.

4. The "khi-hud" calling hell beings experience extremely intensive cold even stronger than the preceding cold hell so much so that the utterance of speech is not possible, but they can only utter a grasp of groan.
5. The "chattering teeth" hell beings experience even more cold than the previous hells and the being is unable to make any noise. Their bodies shiver and the jaws clamp down frozen shut.

6. The "utpala like crack" hell beings experience even more cold than the previous hells. The flesh of these hell beings turns bluish and cracks into five or six lines like that of petals of a blue lotus flower.

7. The "lotus like crack" hell beings' body turns into red from blue and splits into ten or even more cracks like that of petals of a lotus flower.

8. The "great lotus like cracks" hell beings experience the severest of cold due to which the flesh of their body falls apart, becomes extremely red and split into a hundred or thousand of cracks, and they experience excruciating pain.

**Life-span**

*Abhidharmakośa* says:

The life-span in the blistering hell
Equals the length of time taken
For the sesame seeds to be exhausted
From a full container,
Removing one seed every hundred years.
That of the others increases progressively
By twenty times as much.

If someone were to discard a single grain of sesame seed each every hundred years out of a container of grain of the Magadha city, which has the capacity to hold 80 bags (khal) of grain with sesame, the length of time taken to empty the full container filled with 80 bags of sesame seeds would be equivalent to the duration of life-span of a blistering hell being. In each subsequent hell realms the life-span will be twenty times longer.
Contemplating the sufferings of the neighbouring hells

Abhidharmakosa says:

There are sixteen additional hell regions
Corresponding to all eight.
On their four sides are the burning amber,
Putrid mire of corpses, path of razor and the river etc.

At the four direction of all the eight hot hell realms there are the
four neighbouring hells such as the "burning amber," etc., in all making sixteen. Whenever a being comes out from a hot hell, or is
born into it, or escapes in any direction, he sinks knee-deep into a
swamp of the "burning amber." As soon as he steps down into it the
skin and flesh (of his legs) are completely burnt and healed when
raised. When he gains freedom from there, he sinks into a "putrid
mire of corpses," in which creatures with beaks as sharp as needles
gnaw his legs through the skin, flesh upto the level of bones.
Eventually when he is released from there, he reaches the "path
of sharp razors." As soon as he places his foot into it his legs are cut
into pieces but healed again when raised.

The word 'etc.' includes hell of the "forest of sword leaves," where
a hell being travels after he is released from the path of sharp razors.
As soon as he resorts to the shade of these trees, the trees are
shaken by the wind of his (past) karma, and the swords splash like
the shower of rain and completely cut into tatters his body. As a
result of this he faints and collapses, and the wild dogs eat him.
When he is again freed from there chased by many dreadful animals,
eventually he encounters Shamali forest with iron trees. Finding a
place to escape, there when he climbs up and down the tree's sharp
thorns, as long as sixteen finger sizes raised up and down, perforate
his body like a sieve. Birds such as raven with iron beak scoop out his
eye-balls and peck his flesh. Such is his suffering and fear. When he
is freed from there, tortured by heat, he sees running brooks, but as
soon as he rushes towards them he sinks into a burning hot liquid of
acid. Sinking to the bottom of ocean, the flesh and bones are
separated, and when he floats over the surface, the flesh and bones
are regenerated, then again sink down to the bottom. Even though he may want to escape, he is obstructed on both sides by the hell guardians holding weapons. Some are hooked up and laid down upturned then questioned, "What do you want?" But when they reply, "We do not know and see anything; however, we are hungry and thirsty," burning hot iron balls and molten copper liquid are poured into their mouth. Such are their sufferings. The hell of the razor-filled path, the forest of sword leaves and shamali trees are counted as belonging to the same category. Thus are the four neighbouring hells. Although a definite period concerning the duration of their life-span has not been mentioned, a being must remain in each hell realm for hundreds and thousands of years. In this way his suffering is very intense and prolonged.

Contemplating the suffering of the occasional hells

Environment

The location of the occasional hells is indefinite; they dwell around the cold and hot hells, live near oceans, under the earth and water, on the surface, etc.

Sufferings

These beings undergo innumerable sufferings such as being burnt in fire, shivering and cracking with cold, being butchered and consumed, experiencing pleasure at day but pain at night and vice-versa. The life span of these hell being is also indefinite which is obvious from the accounts of gro-bzhin-skyes and dge-'dun-bsrungs. The causes resulting in the rebirth as these hells will be explained in the subsequent passage; however, we must realize that already in the past we have accumulated numerous causes, and still if we were to collect them, we cannot bear to stay delighted, since in between this life and hell stands only a moment of breathing.

Shantideva has said:
Having accumulated actions causing hells
How can you afford to live delightfully now.

Nagarjuna's Letter to a King says:

They have diamond-hard nature; the evildoers,
Being away from hells only till their breath ceases,
Are not frightened in a thousand ways after
Hearing of the hells' immeasurable suffering.

If even seeing drawings or statues,
Recalling, reading or hearing of the hells
Engender fear, what need to speak of
Experiencing this dreadful maturation?

Furthermore it is said:

The suffering here, of being jabbed for a single day
By three hundred spears at full force does not
Approach or equal even a minute portion
Of the least suffering of the hells.

The cause for such suffering is solely the negative activities we have accumulated, therefore, we must abandon them with enthusiasm.

Contemplating the sufferings of hungry ghosts

Most of them are located five hundred Yojanas beneath this world. Those that are scattered live all over, on earth, in the mountains and rivers. Although The Sutra on Close Mindfulness lists thirty-six types, this can be summarised into three categories:

a. Those with the external obstructions
b. Those with the internal obstructions, and
c. Those with both the external and internal obstructions.

Those hungry ghosts that are being tortured by hunger and thirst
have weak and skinny bodies, tiny limbs and throats, shaggy hair, and wander about in search of food and drink, but are unable to find them. No doubt they see heaps of food, rivers and orchards from a distance, but as soon as they reach nearby, they find that the foods have disappeared even without remains, rivers have dried up or have turned into blood and pus, and the orchards have become dry trees, without fruits.

Even though they encounter the place as seen from a distance before, they are being stopped or checked by many people who hold weapons in their hands.

With regard to those hungry ghosts faced with the internal obstructions, it is said:

Some have mouths as small as an eye of a needle, and
Stomachs to the size of a mountain.
Although tortured by hunger
They are unable to eat even the smallest quantity of discarded filth.

These beings suffer from not being able to consume food and drinks. Even when they find foods and drinks they are not able to gulp them; and if they are able to swallow, these disappear in their mouth. Their thirst is due to toxic elements in their mouth, and whenever they are able to swallow the slightest of food, it cannot pass through their throat, and even if the food etc., passes through, their stomach is never filled.

The sufferings of the hungry ghosts faced with obstructions to both food and drink are such that anything they eat or drink turns into blazing fire that consumes internal organs. Consuming filthy substances refers to living only on excrements, urine, pus, blood, spittle, mucus from nose, poison, red-hot amber, and those that produces discomfort only. All hungry ghosts generally experience unbearable suffering from constant hunger and thirst, and because they are naked, in heat, they get scorched, in cold, they shiver, during summer even the moon is hot for them, and in winter even the sun is cold. During summer, even the clouds cause shower of fire. Due to constant wandering in search of food they feel tired and exhausted;
their body being feeble, the joints rattle and sparkle. Because of their feeling of enmity to each other, they are afraid of being shackled, beaten and murdered, and hence flee in great terror. In this way, they experience intense sufferings for a long period of time.

**Life-span**

*Abhidhammakośa* says:

For five hundred of the months and day...

Which means, that the duration of life-span of a hungry ghost is five hundred years by taking a month of human being as a single day of their life.

But as *Nāgārjuna's Letter to a King* says:

Some do not even die for five or Ten thousand years.

Accordingly, the life-span of some hungry ghosts is five thousand and of some even ten thousand years. The cause of their suffering is miserliness, parsimony and others. One must, therefore, act with great care.

**Contemplating the sufferings of the animals**

The animals are of two kinds those living in the ocean and scattered throughout the land. Those living in the ocean refer to animals living in big oceans. They lack protectors or dwellings but wander into unknown directions, being carried away by the waves of the ocean. They eat one another, the larger eating the smaller and the smaller latching into the bodies of the larger, eating holes. The *nagas* are burnt in the burning hot sand each day and are eaten by *garuda* birds; in this way, they live under constant fear of attack from enemies and have terribly unbearable sufferings.

The animals scattered throughout the land refer to those living in
god realms and the human world. Wild animals live under constant threat of attack by enemies and, therefore, lack mental peace. They are being eaten by other wild animals and killed by human beings with force; even in the case of domestic animals - their wool is sheared, openings are made through their nose, they are beaten and exploited, used as a beast of burden to carry heavy loads and murdered for want of their flesh, blood, skin, and bones. Because of their stupidity and dullness they do not know what to cultivate and what to abandon. Hence, being engrossed in confusion, they suffer immensely.

Furthermore, their sufferings such as of hunger, thirst, heat and cold, and torture etc., are similar to those of hells and ghosts. It has been said in Nāgārjuna's Letter to a King:

An animal-state has suffering of many kinds:
Such as being killed, bound, beaten and etc.
Those who have abandoned peace-giving virtue
Suffer the most dreadful lot of eating each other
Some die for the sake of pearls or wool,
Bones, flesh, or skin. Other helpless
Ones are exploited with the blows of kicking,
Fists, whips, hooks, and prods.

Life-span

The longest duration is an aeon.

As said, the longest-living animals live about an aeon and those living shorter is indefinite. In this way, while meditating on the sufferings of unfortunate wandering beings think, "at this point, when it is difficult to tolerate the pain inflicted upon one's finger placed in fire for a single day, or to stay naked in an ice-bound region during chilly cold winter, or to stay without food and drink for a few days, and even to tolerate bite from bee and mosquito, how could I bear the sufferings of hells, hungry ghosts and animals ?" In this way, thinking of one's present experience persuaded by a reinforced sense of anxiety and remorse, and a resolve to be free (from this samsara), make this rebirth of freedoms and endowments meaningful.
Contemplating the sufferings of the higher realms

Through the accumulation of small, middling and great virtuous karmic paths congruent to meritorious collections, one takes rebirth as a human being, god of desire realm and god of higher realm (form and formless) respectively, and enjoys happiness of that rebirth. Since there is no opportunity for peace in the bad realms, if you wish to strive in the means for achieving a higher rebirth, think, "all cyclic existences being the nature of suffering lack essence, and not only the bad realm is full of sufferings, it is equally same even in the higher realms." In this way, contemplate the nature of suffering of the higher realm. This has three divisions:

a. Contemplating the sufferings of the human beings
b. Contemplating the sufferings of the demi-gods
c. Contemplating the sufferings of the gods

Contemplating the sufferings of the human beings

Generally, the womb of the mother in which we stayed for months, at birth was tight, dark, filthy and sensitive to heat and cold; and then when we came out of the womb with our heads down it must have been so painful as if a wire is being pulled out of a vice, when touched like pricking of thorns and needles; and felt the cradling in the hands (of our mother etc.) like a bird is being carried away by a hawk. Then when we become old, the complexion of our body starts ebbing and the lustre of our body becomes ugly and dark-bluish. The hair turns grey, the sharpness and forms of sense organs degenerate, teeth start falling out, our body bends forward and arms and legs become crooked. We become skinny, the flesh of the body slackens, and our face becomes full of wrinkles. Since we become physically weak, it is difficult to stand; while walking we quiver, while sitting have to sit down heavily, and stammer while talking. Because of the weakening of sense organs, the eye sight becomes poor and ear deaf. Being impoverished, we eat less, get hungry (easily) and if we eat more cannot digest; in this way, we are unable to utilize the sensual objects, and possess an unappealing feature in the face of others. Due
to the force of one's previous karma and the immediate conditions, the four elements of the body become imbalanced and we catch illness, resulting in intense sorrow. As the strength of the body has declined, there is no freedom to eat, drink, sleep and we have to resort to taking unwanted medicines and healing causing endless suffering and fear of death.

When it is time to die, no matter what remedy we seek, by way of giving medicine or doing rituals, these will be of no use, but we have to face death in melancholy and suffering, leaving behind all one's possessions accumulated in the past through hardships, power, friends and attendants, as well as this body which we cherished so much. These are the four universal sufferings that a human being must face in general; however, in particular, there are other sufferings which a human being must undergo when the four universal sufferings are at a low ebb. These are:

1. Suffering of not being able to fulfill your wishes, no matter how strong you work even at the cost of your life, in order to accomplish happiness and possessions of least significance of this life-time for want of wealth and power.

2. Suffering of meeting with undesirable conditions such as heat, cold, hunger, thirst, sickness, evil spirit, thieves and robbers.

3. Suffering of separation from excellent joys and happiness of this life such as one's friends, associates, attendants and wealth.

In short, for wealthy people, the more attendants and riches they have, the stronger is their suffering to protect these. The poor suffer from impoverishment not being able to find food, clothes and other necessities even though they may search for them.

*Jātāka Tales* says:

One is afflicted through guarding
The other is tired of seeking.
No matter you are rich or poor,
Neither has happiness.

It is also said in The Four Hundred Stanzas:

The rich have mental suffering
The poor have physical suffering
Each day the world is destroyed
By these two types of sufferings.

As has been said above, these are rather obvious from our own experiences.

Contemplating the sufferings of the demi-gods

First, when the demi-gods see the affluence of the gods, due to their jealousy, they become impatient and constantly experience unbearable sufferings. Occasionally, they wage war with the gods, and because the demi-gods have weaker force of merits they become victims of intense suffering such as of murdering, beating, cutting and impairing of their limbs. While in combat with the gods, if the demi-gods could not cut-off the heads or waists of the gods, even though they may be wounded, they revive, whereas the demi-gods succumb to death, like human beings, should a vital point of their body become the target. When they die, the image of their body is reflected in a lake called "all appearing" and before returning from the battle-field their friends and relatives knowing this mourn their death in melancholy. Since the majority of demi-gods side with the negative forces, therefore, they do not have faith in the dharma. Even if there are a few who may have faith in the dharma, because of being obstructed by their ripening kama, they lack the fortune to receive higher realizations.

Contemplating the sufferings of the gods

This has two divisions:

a. Sufferings of the gods in the desire realm
b. Sufferings of the gods in the higher realm
Contemplating the sufferings of the gods in the desire realm

The gods in the desire realm are carried away by their past addiction to the pleasure and comfort of the sensual objects so much so that they are not even aware of the exhaustion of their life-span, but when they encounter death, the lustre of their body fades away, they start disliking their cushion, the flower garlands decay, dirt starts collecting on their clothes and gives foul smell, and the body begins to sweat for the first time. These are the five signs of a death which occur a week before their death. The suffering as intense and lasts long. At that point their own partner goddesses and attendants abandon them and approach others to seek their company; however, this gives them even stronger suffering and mental displeasure. Especially, it is unbearably painful, when they know that they have to leave behind all the marvels of the divine possessions and comforts without choice, although they are attached to them. Even after death it is just possible that they may be reborn as gods, because only a few take rebirth as human beings and most of them are reborn in the bad realm. Knowing that once born there they must experience excruciating suffering for a long period of time, they generate immensely unbearable misery.

This has been said in the *Sutra of Close Mindfulness*:

While falling from the god-realm
The intensity of their sufferings, however,
Is incomparable to that of
A fraction of the sixteen hells.

It is also said in *Nāgārjuna's Letter to a King*:

Having been Indra, worthy of world's veneration,
One falls again to the earth, through the force of *karma*,
Or having been a *Chakravartin* monarch,
One assumes again in cyclic existence a servant's status.

Moreover, when the prosperity and comfort of the gods with stronger
force of merit are seen by those with weaker strength of merit, the latter are outshined and become cowards. The powerful gods expel the weaker and the latter suffer intensely. Particularly, the gods of the Four Great Kings and Thirty Three combat with the demi-gods, who slice and split their body with weapons and murder them. Such is the intense suffering.

*Contemplating the sufferings of the gods in the higher realm*

Although there is no manifest suffering in the form and the formless realms, they are not beyond the nature of being solely possessed by pervasive suffering. As if intoxicated by meditative concentration, the ordinary beings do not advance in their spiritual qualities, and due to their addiction to concentration, they cannot release themselves from experiencing the taste of concentration, due to which some die because of regression in the experience of their states of concentration. Particularly, the ordinary beings abiding in the form and formless realm again take rebirth in the desire realm after the exhaustion of their past *kamma*, losing confidence in their experience of ecstatic feeling gained in the past during their meditation on the mundane concentration, and the form and formless states of concentration, and then fall into a bad realm like the shooting of an arrow in the sky as soon as the energy propelled through force of their contaminated bliss is exhausted.

*Nāgārjuna's Letter to a King* says:


> Having attained the extremely great pleasures of celestial Realms, and even Brahma's bliss of non-attachment,
> Again one undergoes incessant suffering
> As kindling for the fires of *Avici*.

Just as any fire, big or small, cannot be beyond hot, similarly, no matter wherever you are born, high or low within the three realms of this cyclic existence, it is not beyond the nature of suffering. Because, wherever you live the place is full of suffering, whoever you associate with the company is of suffering, and whatever resources you use are
not beyond the influence of suffering.

The Uttaratantra says:

Just as the faces have no aromatic smell  
So do the five migrators lack pleasure  
Whose suffering is always like pain inflicted  
By fire, weapon, acid and others.

Contemplating the nature of the three types of sufferings

Generally, within cyclic existence, the sufferings constitute both causes and results. First concerns the sufferings of the gods and human beings, who no doubt enjoy adequate companionship and resources, but their mind is conjoined with the non-virtues and commit unwholesome activities. This is the causal suffering. The second constitute sufferings of hunger and impoverishment of the three lower rebirths and the higher rebirth, and of those caught with physical illness and the mental anxiety.

These sufferings can be condensed into three types:

a. the suffering of miseries  
b. the suffering of change, and  
c. the pervasive suffering.

The first type of suffering constitutes all unpleasant feelings such as of heat, cold, thirst and hunger etc., which has the nature similar to adding poison on the sore (salt on the sore). This type of suffering primarily exists in the three lower realms. The second type of suffering encompasses all pleasurable feelings such as of our life, resources and including even the ecstasies of concentration. The nature of such suffering is like sitting near the fire when it is cold. This type of suffering is primarily experienced by humans and gods of the desire realm.

The third type of suffering acts as the basis of all other sufferings, and it is this mere collection of composite aggregates we have
acquired which acts as a basis for the first two sufferings. All other sufferings such as that of birth, aging etc., arise out of this suffering of pervasion; however, when the suffering is associated with a neutral feeling, only then it is named as the compositional suffering, which is primarily extant in the fourth stage of concentration. This is exactly what is meant when it is stated in the sutra - "any feelings whatsoever that exist are, therefore, sufferings." As long as you are not freed from this type of suffering, you cannot free yourself from the other two. This is because if you do not cut the tree by its root, cutting leaves and branches simply cannot destroy the tree.

IV. Contemplating the Law of Causality

This has three divisions: the general, the specific and a summary of the four noble truths.

Contemplating the law of causality in general

As it is said in the sutra:

The *karma* of embodied beings
Never go to waste even for eons.
When (the conditions) assemble, in due course
The fruits must ripen.

The results of the virtuous karma is happiness and that of the non-virtuous is suffering. There are an inconceivable number of teachings as to how the fruits of the positive and negative *karma* ripen distinctly; therefore, accordingly we must follow the paths of cultivation and negation. Be it wholesome or unwholesome *karma*, even though it may be weak during its causal stage, it multiplies during the ripening of its results.

A strong karma multiplies by a hundred or thousand times, but that of the strongest is infinite like the production of grains such as of barley. Therefore, unless you destroy the (evil) karma you have accumulated through the application of antidotal forces, it is impossible that a *karma* will go to waste until the ripening of its
results. Hence, it is extremely important to take great care with regards those to be cultivated and negated.

*Contemplating the law of causality in particular*

This has three divisions:

a. Contemplating the non-virtues as objects of abandonment
b. Contemplating the virtues as objects of cultivation
c. Transforming the unspecified *karmas* into virtues

*Contemplating the non-virtues as objects of abandonment*

This constitutes the four non-virtues karmas: 1) a misdeed by nature which becomes a non-virtuous act whoever commits it; 2) the three poisonous delusions, jealousy, miserliness and so forth, and all primary and secondary delusions that are capable of arousing negative deeds; 3) all non-virtues of the three doors motivated by the above delusions - the misdeeds by degree of law, i.e. the non-virtues as a result of breaking of vows you have received. In this way, all the sufferings of cyclic existence arise from non-virtues as their cause. Although the non-virtues are numerous, these can be roughly summarized into ten that are essentially important for practice.

As it is said in *Abhidharmakosa*:

Roughly, the paths of karma
Is explained under ten
Either of virtuous or non-virtuous.

There are three non-virtuous activities of the body, which are:

a. Killing is to murder a person unmistakly aimed for without giving up the intention to kill him until he is dead.

b. Taking what is not given is either to rob or steal others' belongings and generating a sense of these possessions as
being one's own.

c. Sexual misconduct is to have sex with inappropriate partners such as with a woman owned by others, persons of blood relation within seven generations, prostitutes that are not professionally ransomed by others, those under the care of parents, king or others and with those prohibited by their vows of ordination. It is also a sexual misconduct to have sex at improper times such as during sickness, mourning, pregnancy, menstrual period and when it is never contenting due to (intense) lust. Improper places constitute having sex inside a temple or place of worship, on a pile of bricks or hard ground uneven and rough which could injure the vagina. Improper passages constitute having sex through other orifices of the body besides vagina. The above are improper with regard to a household but for those who are ordained sexual activity of any kind becomes a sexual misconduct.

There are four non-virtuous activities of speech:

a. Telling a lie is to speak something untrue knowingly by changing the expression with an idea of deceiving others. When the meaning is understood by the other party it becomes a lie. This includes not only verbal expressions but also physical gestures.

b. Slander is use of words of dissension with an intention to separate two parties in disharmony, and when the meaning is understood by the other person an act of slander has been committed.

c. Using harsh words is to use language that hurts the feelings of others such as by directly criticising others so that they may hear it. When the meaning is understood an act of using harsh word has been committed.

d. Idle gossip is to use any speech other than the first three, such
as indulging in meaningless talks about songs, dance and drama, war, business and sex, as well as talking about wrong philosophical doctrines.

Of the three non-virtuous activities of mind:

a. Covetousness is a strong intention wishing to possess others' dwelling, wealth and so forth to be one's own.

b. Harmful intent is to hold malicious thought wishing others to experience suffering motivated by a desire to inflict harm on others.

c. Wrong views is to firmly hold or assert the law of causality as untrue, and rebirth, the three jewels of refuge and so forth as non-existent.

These ten non-virtues have been explained here assuming that the factors for committing a non-virtuous action are complete; however, you must train with extreme care to avoid all other similar acts of ten non-virtues such as an act of killing without intention but by mistake, since it has been said:

All actions arising out of desire, hatred
And ignorance are non-virtuous.

Now, concerning the results of these non-virtues, there are three:

a. Ripening result
b. Results that corresponds to their causes
c. Environmental result

First, the ripening result of these non-virtues can be strong, middling and weak depending on the intensity of the motivation and so forth. Thus, the strongest results in the rebirth as a hell, the middling as a hungry ghost and the weak as an animal. Consequently, a being then experiences the sufferings explained before.
Second, the experiences of the results corresponding to the causes will be as follows: killing makes life short; stealing brings poverty; sexual misconduct invites many enemies; lying causes too much slander; divisive talk causes conflict with friends; through the use of harsh words unpleasant talks will be heard about you; idle gossip causes lack of trust of one's words; covetousness obstructs fulfilment of your wishes; harmful intention causes fear; and wrong views make you a dull and unintelligent person. Habituated result corresponding to cause is such that a person will naturally take delight in committing the same act he has habituated himself to in the past.

Third, the environmental results ripen on the surrounding in which you live. As a result of the act of killing, the crops and medicines will be less effective; stealing causes crop failure; sexual misconduct makes the surrounding filled with dust, mist and fog; due to lying, the surrounding will be filled with foul-smelling excrements; divisive talk creates a surrounding full of precipices with deep ravines; through harsh word the surrounding will be filled with a dry plain full of thorny bushes and a salt marsh; through idle gossip the four seasons of a year become irregular; covetousness results in poor and weak crops; harmful intent ruins the essence of nutritional products, and wrong views result in the scarcity of crops to total non-availability of crops. In this way, the results corresponding to their causes and the environmental results and so on are experienced indefinitely in this and the future lives.

Contemplating the virtues as objects of cultivation

Generally, there are innumerable (number of) antidotes such as the eighty four thousand heaps of doctrine, but these can be roughly condensed into the abandonment of ten non-virtues, explained earlier, by intention, as well as of not repeating their commitment through body and speech in thought and behaviour. Therefore, think, "I shall always abide by these ten virtues." The meaning of having eliminated the ten negativities by intention is never wanting to commit them with the knowledge of their drawbacks. However, not repeating their commitment through body and speech not only means always not committing the ten non-virtues but to be mindful of their
abandonment by intention even when you meet with an opportunity that enables you to commit them effortlessly and is temporarily more beneficial. It is therefore not enabling you to do so. In fact both these factors must be present for all the seven activities of body and speech. The three non-virtues of mind can only be abandoned mentally. A thought that considers committing of non-virtues as inappropriate is an intention to abandon negativities, and the knowledge of that is consequently an unmistaken conventional wisdom, thus becoming an antidote having the nature of moral principle as well. When the force of your wish to abandon negativity is strong, even though sleep, dulness, and mental distraction etc., may interfere with you (in your meditation), as soon as you recognizes these as interfering factors, you can counteract them. This arises due to the force of karmic seed sown in the past. Hence the wish to abandon ten non-virtues along with their seeds are the ten virtues. Besides these, in short, all activities of body such as making prostration, circumambulation and offering, going and coming for sentient beings and spiritual purposes; and activities of speech like the expression of eulogy, incantation and giving teachings for the purpose of sentient being etc.; all such activities of body and speech motivated by a wholesome heart, as well as of the mental activities such as meditation of faith, renunciation, love, compassion and others that are naturally wholesome in thought must be carefully cultivated. Because it is said:

Those that are produced and generated from lack of attachment, hatred and closed-mindedness, are virtuous.

Now, concerning the results of the virtues, there are also three:

a. Ripening result
b. Results that correspond to their causes
c. Environmental results

First, the ripening results can be of three kinds - great, middling and small - varying according to the force of the virtues which is determined by whether or not these are conjoined by a wholesome
intention throughout the three stages of their development - preparatory, actual and concluding. Accordingly, the great virtues lead to rebirth as a god of the higher realm, the middling as a god of desire realm and the small as a human being. However, it has been said in the sutra that a virtuous act associated with impure intention will result in the rebirth as a demi-god.

Second, the results that correspond to its causes are just the opposites of those results explained earlier as from the ten non-virtues.

*The Precious Garland* says:

- Long life, good resources and no-enmity
- Praise, fame and pleasant speech
- Respect for speech and wish fulfilling
- Mental peace and increasing wisdom

Are the ten results of virtues corresponding to their cause.

Third, the environmental results of the virtues are as said:

- Powerful, good harvest, delightful
- Equality of high and low, and fertile land.
- Growing vegetation, and normal seasons
- Thick crop, nutritious food and plenty crop

Are the environmental results of ten virtues.

To abide by the morality of ten virtues is the cause for happiness throughout this and the future lives; therefore, it is important to think, "I shall cultivate them by all means."

*Transforming the unspecified karmas into virtues*

Activities such as eating food, walking and strolling that are neither conjoined with wholesome or unwholesome motivation, nor the results of which cannot be specified to be happiness or suffering, are categorized as the unspecified activities.

No matter whichever of these activities you engage in, since these
waste your time without gaining much, it is, therefore, important to transform them into virtues, thinking - "because all those activities such as eating food, walking, strolling, I engaged in are fruitless and that these do not seem to become a cause of gaining freedom from cyclic existence, how regrettable it would be to have wasted all these without any significance, but now, I shall transform them into virtues by all means." In this way, let all your activities of the three gates (body, speech and mind) be conjoined with the mind of enlightenment.

*The Four Hundred Stanzas* says:

When you have the mind of enlightenment
All virtuous or non-virtuous (activities)
Transform into excellent goodness
Because your mind is under the force of virtue.

*A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* also says:

From that time hence,
Even while asleep or unconcerned,
A force of merit equal to the sky
Will perpetually ensue.

Hence, without letting your mind distracted outwardly but controlling it from within, with full determination, direct all your activities to become a meaningful wholesome path.

*A Summary of the Four Noble Truths*

Truth has the meaning of being non-deceptive. Through the interdependence of karma and delusion as their cause, the three realms come into existence as their result, which is also due to the force of the inevitability of the cause and effect. Therefore, these are the first two truths. Through making efforts in the cultivation of the auxiliaries to complete enlightenment, the state of thorough liberation is attained, which is also a result of the inevitability of truth.
Therefore, these are called the noble truths. In this way, generally, all phenomena within cyclic existence and beyond are contained in the four truths, and, therefore, there is nothing that is to be practised by an aspirant of liberation which does not come under the four truths. These are: the origin of all, the suffering, the path and the cessation.

I. The Truth of Origin of All Sufferings

Since we lack understanding of the fundamental mode of abidance of (all phenomena) as existing in the inexpressible and inconceivable emptiness, we misconceive the aggregates to be the self ("I") through the force of discrimination employed by our intellectually acquired ignorance. Due to this misapprehension of aggregates as the self, we generate desire-attachment towards harmonious factors, hatred towards inharmonious factors, and ignorance towards the neutral. Through the force of three poisonous delusions, the five delusions are produced. These delusions are known as extraneous thoughts, the source of ever-afflictive negativities analogous to a farm land during summer upon which anything sown will grow. Although there are numerous karmas, those that propel a being into cyclic existence can be condensed into three, which are:

a. demeritorious karma
b. meritorious karma, and
c. unfluctuating karma

Of the three, the first propels a person into the bad realm, the second into the desire realm and the last into two higher realms (the form and formless realms).

Division of karmas are the same as has already been explained earlier. It is therefore important to eliminate delusions, the root of cyclic existence through the application of antidotes whenever these arise within us.

As has been said by Phadampa:

O, Dingri people!
If you do not apply antidotes
As soon as the delusion arises
You forsake the purpose of dharma.

II. The Truth of Suffering

The truth of suffering results from the truth of origin. It is through the force of the three poisonous delusions and the five delusions that the beings wander about within the three realms of cyclic existence, and thereby experience continuous sufferings of the six types of wandering beings. In this way, they are constantly tortured and become pitiable. This has been explained in Lalitavistara sutra as follows:

Through the power of craving, existence and ignorance,
Beings are reborn in the realms of human,
Gods and the three lower realms.
The five migrators are always ignorant,
Turning like a potter's wheel.

Furthermore:

The three worlds are consumed
By the suffering of old age and disease,
This world without a protector
Is consumed by the fire of death.
The migrators within samsara are always ignorant
Like bees caught in a vase.

In short, no doubt the luminous nature of the mind of sentient beings has the essence of Tathagatas; nevertheless, it is deluded by the force of adventitious stains entailing improper modes of thinking and extraneous thoughts. Motivated by these, sentient beings exercise contaminated actions, and thereby aggregates, elements, and sources of perception within cyclic existence are produced. This has been said in Uttaratantra:

Improper modes of thinking produce
Karma and delusions.
The Karma and delusions produce
The aggregates, the elements and sense faculties.

Consequently due to the difference between virtuous and non-virtuous karmas, the aggregates of an unfortunate being and happy being are distinctly acquired.

As The Jewel Garland says:

Non-virtues result in sufferings
And likewise the bad migrations.
Virtues result in happy migrations
And pleasures in all the times.

Hence, persuaded by the (understanding of) faults of the cyclic existence explained before, you must sincerely strive to the best of your ability to turn your mind towards (committing) virtuous activities with great enthusiasm.

A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life says:

By committing wholesome actions
Which are in the mind
Wherever I go I shall be presented with
Tokens of the fruit of that merit.

III. The Truth of the Path

Its causal condition is the Buddha nature, and the circumstantial condition is the spiritual master. Through practising the paths taught by him, the truth of the path is produced within oneself.

The understanding of bases as they are depends upon a spiritual master. The practise of paths depends on an individual, but the paths to be practised are virtues combining the method and wisdom that are a gateway to enter the state of liberation. As it is said in the Sutra:
The wisdom combined with method is a path.
The method combined with wisdom is a path.

The Abhidharmakośa also says:

Any path that knows the sufferings,
Abandons the origin of all sufferings,
Actualizes the cessation and meditates on the paths
In short, has the characteristics of a path.

Having practised the teachings of Buddha in general and the stages of paths in particular through sincere determination in accordance with one's own mental faculty, one advances gradually through the path of accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation and total perfection; however, the attainment of fruits depend on the practices.

IV. The Truth of Cessation

The basis upon which all phenomena within cyclic existence must cease is emptiness. Further, the mode of abidance of all phenomena, the reality, or suchness is totally free from all extremes of elaboration such as of existence and non-existence. Because the suchness - emptiness, is present in all phenomena, it is neither distinct from them, nor one with the conditioned phenomena because of their distinct characteristics.

That which is immutable within its sphere of reality being free of extremes of externalism and nihilism etc., is emptiness. Through practising the paths that lead to the understanding of emptiness, the truth of origin of all suffering - the three poisonous delusions, the five delusions, and the paths motivated by these delusions ceases to exist. Consequently, the resultant aggregates of suffering and miseries produced in reliance upon these aggregates ceases to exist.

In short, the abandonment of delusions upon one's own basic awareness along with their latencies until their total vanishment and dissolution into the sphere of reality is the wisdom of emptiness, the basis of (all) cessation. Because this is the supreme truth of cessation, it is known as the attainment of liberation or state beyond suffering.
In this way, it is also taught that the nature of the truth of suffering is true cessation, and the nature of the truth of all origin is the true path. The cessation and path, the abandonment and insight are indivisible. To illustrate this, wrong diet and behavioral patterns that cause sickness are the (truth of origin of sufferings) and the experience of pains caused by sickness is the (truth of) suffering. Treatment of pains through medication and proper dietary discipline is the (truth of) paths. Finally, total cure from sickness is the (truth of) cessation. Similarly, parsimony out of miserliness is the (truth of) origin of all; impoverishment as a result is the (truth of) suffering; giving is the truth of the path, and consequently, the elimination of suffering of poverty in the future is the true cessation. In this way one must know the law of causality.

Having preceded by sincere practice of the points explained before, in order to start working towards achievement of Buddhahood for the purpose of all sentient beings, you must seek a special object to go for refuge.

Since the three jewels are free of all faults, perfect all qualities, and possess the ability to protect all sentient beings, your practice of seeking refuge in reliance upon them must be wholehearted and free of all hopes and fears. Then meditate on the four immeasurable thoughts such as compassion and others through taking these attitudes as the basis of your practice. Following this, generate a wish to attain Buddhahood for the fulfillment of others' purpose, and engage in the paths leading to its attainment in reliance upon the beings. In this way, generate the two minds of enlightenment. The aspiring and engaging aspect of attitude are called the mind of enlightenment (or the minds of enlightenment) that can be generated through ceremony.

Having meditated on both the minds of enlightenment assured to integrate with your mind stream, finally, when your mind rests in a totally free state of existence, it becomes the ultimate mind of enlightenment.

The ways to generate the mind of enlightenment through ceremony have been explained in Vairocanabhisambhodi tantra. This can be found in the treatises of Nāgārjuna as well. The paths just explained above in reliance upon the common and uncommon texts
of graded paths have been presented in accordance with the respective texts here, in order that the purpose of those texts and teachings may be fulfilled. This much said, I shall conclude the text here. So long as you are not isolated from this purpose, your practice will become meaningful. Hence, you must make every effort so that these spiritual practices do not become an additional tool of your prejudice but add to the advancement of your mind-stream.

Following my guru's instructions
This stainless speech to exhort
Both self and others to achieving great goals
Has been explained, but briefly.
Who else could expound its unlimited scope?

However, just as even a drop of water scooped
From a river could quench the suffering of thirst
Even a partial understanding of the paths of engagement
Will ensure an unfluctuating confidence
In those to be cultivated and abandoned.

May all beings be liberated from the great ocean of existence
And be carried to the jewel island
In the majestic ship of virtues
Through the force of the wind of resolve.

This text, a preliminary for commoners explaining the stages of paths called the Jewel Ladder, has been written by the lazy Gyurmed Dorjee, in order to assist those on the initial level of practice.
PART II

COMMENTARY

INTRODUCTORY TEACHINGS
INTRODUCTORY TEACHINGS

According to Buddhism both the external world and its inhabitants are bound within circumstances through the force of karma. Today, we must feel that this is happening as a result of our karmic link that has now begin to ripen. This is thus an auspicious coincidence. While welcoming you all with my Tashi Deleg, I pray at the same time that this discourse will help in its modest way to alleviate all negative forces that overwhelm the world today. May this discourse also expel your as well as my misfortunes and negative thoughts.

We should keep this point in our mind that in one way Buddhism cannot be regarded only as a religion. It is realism. Whatever Buddha has taught has room for investigation and experiment. Unlike the western philosophies which keep changing, his is still that view taught two thousand years ago. Buddha also makes it very clear that his teachings do not represent a statutory law, which means that whoever disobeys it shall be sent behind bars; there is no force behind it which says you must follow it or you must die. Such a force does not exist behind the Teachings of the Buddha.

In other words, complete freedom is given to every individual whether to follow or not what Buddha has taught. The followers of the four Tibetan traditions cannot pass new kinds of laws saying that one who does not follow the Buddha’s teachings should be duly punished. Such a law cannot be laid down. The important point which we must keep in our minds is that Buddha’s teachings are like a tool to make us better human beings, provide a better state of mind. That is the aim of the teachings of Buddha.

Our teacher, Buddha Shakyamuni, who is also called by the name Lord Siddhartha, Gautama Buddha, taught this doctrine in such a way that it accords with the dispositions and mental capabilities of the various disciples. This is indeed a very special feature of his teachings. Basically his teaching consists of the eighty-four thousand heaps of doctrine (see: pp. 154) predominantly aimed at severing the three poisonous delusions - desire (‘dod-chags), hatred (zhe-sdang), and closed-mindedness (gti-mug) and the combination of the three. The eighty-four thousand heaps of doctrines can be condensed into
the three baskets of teachings - the Discipline (skt: vinaya/tib: 'dul-ba), the Discourses (skt: sutra/tib: mdo-sde) and the Metaphysics (skt: abhi-dharma/tib: mngon-pa). The eighty-four thousand heaps of doctrines can be further condensed into the twelve scriptural categories (gsung-rab yan-lag bcu-gnyis), which are - 1) the discourses (skt: sutra/tib: mdo-sde) 2) the intermediate verses (skt: geyam/tib: dbyangs-kyis bsnyad-pa) 3) the prophetic teachings (skt: vyakaranam/tib: lung-du bstan-pa) 4) the verses (skt: gatha/tib: tsigs-su bcad-pa) 5) the specific teachings (skt: nidanam/tib: ched-ju brjod-pa) 6) the introductory teachings (skt: udanam/tib: ched-ju brjod-pa) 7) the parables (skt: ava-danam/tib: rtags-pa brjod-pa) 8) the legends (skt: itivrtti-kam/tib: de-ltar byung-ba) 9) the life stories (skt: jatakam/tib: skyes-rabs) 10) the grand teachings (skt: vaipulyam/tib: shin-tu rgyas-pa) 11) the marvellous teachings (skt: adbhutam/tib: rmad-du byung-ba) and 12) the finalised teachings (skt: upadesa/tib: gタン-la dbab-pa). These are further summarised into the Eight-Thousand Verse Perfection of Wisdom teachings (Astawadrikaprajnaparamita sutra), which is further synthesized into the Heart of Wisdom Perfection (Prajnanaparamitahrdya sutra) that concerns emptiness and this into the wisdom syllabic A (ุ). For an ordinary person who does not have the support of past karma it would be unthinkable to study and practice the entire range of teachings mentioned above. However, our teacher Buddha Shakyamuni is skilful to have taught according to the various capabilities and mental dispositions of his disciples who may be a parson of the advanced (skyes-bu-rab), intermediate ('bring) and small (chung-ngu) scope. Their specific paths of practice will be dealt with later in the appropriate context of the text (see: pp. 76). Due to their different approaches on the path of practice, the division into the higher and lower vehicles known as the Hinayana and Mahayana evolved. Diverse means of interpreting the view of Buddhist philosophy gave rise to the four schools of philosophy, which are the Vaibhasika (bye-brag smra-ba), Sautantrika (mdo-sde-pa), Cittamatra (sems-tzam-pa) and Prasangika (thal-'gyur-pa). Of these the first two belong to Hinayana and latter two to Mahayana tradition.

The uncommon ways of categorising Buddhist doctrine according to the Nyingma school are: 1) the causal characteristic vehicle (rgyu mtsan-nyid kyi theg-pa) and 2) the resultant secret mantra vehicle
('bras-bu gsang-sngag gi theg-pa). The causal vehicle comprises the Sravakayana (nyan-thos kyi theg-pa), Pratekya-buddhayana (rang-rgyal gyi theg-pa) and Bodhisattvayana (byang-sems kyi theg-pa), whereas the resultant vehicle comprises the Kriya (bya-rgyud), the Carya (bya-rgyud), the Yoga (rnal-'byor rgyud), the Mahayoga (ma-ha yoga) the Annuyoga (bla-med-rgyud), and the Atiyoga (a-ti yo-ga). The Mahayoga, deals with the generation stage practice (bskyed-pa ma-ha yo-ga), Annuyoga, deals with the oral transmission concerning the completion stage practices (lung a-nu yo-ga), and, Atiyoga, deals with the great perfection practices (rdzogs-pa chen-po a-ti yo-ga).

The text we are concerned with right now is aimed at understanding the great perfection doctrine. According to the new tantra school (gsang-sngag gsar-ma), those classes of tantras that are predominantly occupied with generation stage practices are known as the father tantra (pha-rgyud); those that emphasise the completion stage practices are known as the mother tantra (ma-rgyud); and those that lay equal emphasis on both the generation and completion stage practices are known as the non-dual tantra (gnyis-me-kyi rgyud) because, here a practitioner has reached the stage where the immediate goal of his practice is mainly on the attainment of the state of unity (zung-'jug-gi go-'phang).

In order to undertake the Vajrayana practices, as a matter of fact, interested persons must travel on the paths leading to the final stage of attainment in a serial manner, step by step, just as a person wishing to go to the top floor of this Library's building must walk through the ground floor, following the steps one after another. Unless you have some magical sagacity or wings to fly, you must follow a sequential order to reach the top floor. Similarly, a person wishing to enter the Vajrayana teachings must first travel through the common paths of practices which are primarily the four ways of transforming a person's mind towards dharma.

Preliminaries of composing the text

This text, in particular deals with the common practices, the basic Buddhist trainings required to build a fertile state of mind for higher
attainments. Because we are going to follow a root text upon which I am going to give commentary we must discuss the topic in the manner in which the author has chosen to explain. First, therefore, are the preliminaries. The preliminary of composing the text has three as follows:

1) expounding the name of the text
2) the way the name of the text is given
3) the purpose of naming the text.

First, expounding the name of the text, common \texttt{<thun-mongs>}, here refers to preliminary practices that are fundamental and common to all levels of practitioners in order to practice at the higher levels. Preliminary \texttt{<mgon- 'gro>}, qualifies these practices such as the contemplation of the rarity of finding this human rebirth (\texttt{dal-'byor rnyed-dka'a}), and others to be discussed later. Discourse \texttt{<chos-bshad>} has been metaphorically represented by the name of the text the Jewel Ladder \texttt{<rin-chen them-skas>}. Second, the name of the text has been given in order that it is easy for people to remember and identify it without any confusion. The author has chosen the name Jewel Ladder for the purpose of easy identification just as all external and internal phenomena are given a name each for their identification.

Third, the purposes of giving the name to this text are three: the great, middling and modest. The great purpose is to enable a person of advanced scope not only to identify the text but also to knows its subject matter merely by hearing its name. The middling purpose is to enable a person of intermediate scope to know the category of the text to which it belongs, the Hinayana (\texttt{theg-dman}) or Mahayana (\texttt{theg-chen}). The modest purpose is simply to guide a person of lowest scope to locate the text, just as a pharmacist would recognise a medicine from the name on the cover of the container.

What then is the purpose of using the Sanskrit word, OM SVASTI before the title? I would not refute the existence of a system of writing, religion and culture in Tibet even before Thonmi Smabhota invented the Tibetan script, as conceived and commissioned by King Songtsen Gampo. However, it was during the
reign of King Trisong Deutsan that the three principal translators - Vairochana, Kawa Peltzeg and Chogro Lui Gyaltsen and others, in all, one hundred and eight translators, were vigorously involved in the task of translating original Buddhist texts in Sanskrit into Tibetan. Later during the new period of dissemination (stan-pa phyi-dar), translators like the great Rinchen Zangpo added to the treasury of Buddhist literature. Many learned Indian Buddhist masters have collaborated in the works of translation throughout these periods of renaissance. In order to honour and remember their kindness, particularly the kindness of the early Indian Buddhist masters who recorded the teachings of Buddha and wrote commentaries to them, the author uses the Sanskrit word OM SVASTI at the beginning of the text. In general, the OM represents the essence of the body, speech, and mind of the Buddhas. The drop (•) represents the body, the vowel sign (〜) speech and A (.ASCII) syllable also called the unborn (skyes-med) represents the mind of a Buddha. SVASTI may be translated as "May there be good fortune."

The author places special significance on the use of this word and says, "May good fortune prevail upon me so that the writing of this may be brought to completion; may good fortune prevail for those who would practice by listening to this discourse; and may good fortune also prevail on those who would give teachings of it to others in the times to come." Hence for many reasons the sanskrit word OM SVASTI has been written at the beginning of the text. So called "<zhes-byab-a>", here refer to the metaphoric title of the text, "The Jewel Ladder." Such a jewel ladder is made out of not just one particular jewel but of many precious objects such as gold, silver, sapphire, lapis lazuli etc.

This being the nature of the teachings contained in the text it has been called the Jewel Ladder.

Qualities of an author

Now, concerning the author of this text, if I were to discuss the criteria for different authors, it is said that at the most, a person composing a text must be someone who has seen the reality of all
phenomena nakedly; if not, then he must be someone who has received a vision of his meditational deity; or at least he must be a master learned in the five sciences. These are the three levels of authors, and the author of this particular text, Minling Terchen Gyurmed Dorjee, I am sure, belonged to the first category of authors, who has seen the reality nakedly. This is substantiated by his last words spoken at the time of his death:

All appearance, sound and intrinsic awareness arising in the form of deities, mantras and the Dharmakaya
Has intermingled into the realm of the body and wisdom.
May this profound experience of secret nature of a great Yogi
Become inseparably one in taste and essence with his heart-centre.

This, we could say was the will he left as he was passing away. From this verse one could say that he has definitely understood the reality of phenomena as well as receiving visions of his meditational deities, spiritual masters, dakas and dakinis. Above this, the treasure of text that he has revealed alone consists of 9 volumes and treatises to these treasure texts comprise more than 25 volumes. Besides, he was both a teacher and disciple of the great fifth Dalai Lama, who was an ecumenical master of meditation.

Roughly, 300 human years have passed since the time of the fifth Dalai Lama, and still the lineage and practice of meditation of the author remain among us today. Hence, the above qualities certainly place Minling Terchen Gyurmed Dorjee among the authors of first rank. We are, therefore, fortunate that this text written by such an incomparable holder of doctrine is today available to us for study and practice. This text is heavily blessed. We are all very lucky for obtaining this opportunity.

With this, we finished explaining the name of the text, why this name "Jewelled Ladder" was given to the text and why the sanskrit word OM SVASTI was written at the beginning of the text. To remind you once again, the title of the text was <A Preliminary Discourse for Commoners called The Jewel Ladder>. 
Obeisance

The words of obeisance are explained under two headings - the general and specific. The general is revealed in the first line of text: "I make obeisance to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas." Generally speaking, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas reside throughout the ten directions - the four cardinal directions, four sub-directions, zenith and nadir. They appear in all the four times - past, present, future and indefinite. Who is a Buddha? The Tibetan word for Buddha is <Sang-gye>. <Sang> means someone who has eliminated and purified all stains of negativities and afflicting emotions together with their propensities; therefore, it refers to someone who is fully awakened or completely enlightened. <Gye> means fully accomplished or perfected, i.e. someone who has fully accomplished all those qualities worth cultivating and abandoned all those to be eliminated. Our teacher Buddha Shakyamuni is thus a fully enlightened and accomplished person capable of guiding others to the state of liberation and enlightenment.

Bodhisattvas are his principal disciples, his wise spiritual sons and daughters. <Jang chub sempa>, the Tibetan name, contains the following meanings: <Jang> means to purify, one who purifies and cleanses the afflicting emotions along with their propensities. <Chub> means accomplishment of wholesome qualities. And, <Sempa> means warrior, that is to say, a spiritual warrior who possesses great strength and courage to fight negative forces, be they physical or mental, for the benefit of other sentient beings. When the author says, "I make obeisance to all..." <To all> refers to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas residing throughout the ten directions in all the four periods. Thus, meaning I, Gyurmed Dorjee, the author, pay homage and make prostration to all.

The specific mode of expressing obeisance is shown by the following stanza of the text: "I make prostration to my Guru, the entity of Three Jewels......You display an infinite multitude dance of illusion." With these words makes obeisance to his root guru who is also his father, Sangdak Trinley, from whom he has directly obtained spiritual trainings. To explain the verse word by word, great bliss, here refers to the sphere of primordial purity (bk’a-dag gdod-ma’i-
dbyings) free of eight extremes (mth'a-brgyad dang bral-ba). Sphere of peace (zhi-ba'i dbyings), is heavily loaded with very profound philosophical meaning and, in order to explain this, one must know that ignorance is the root of cyclic existence ('khor-ba). This causes the cultivation of all negative emotions and activities. Because of this, incessant suffering is experienced by beings within cyclic existence. To put an end to the sufferings, one must sever the ignorance; for that, the wisdom understanding selflessness which directly nullifies the ignorance must be acquired. This wisdom is gained only through proper training and instruction. Peace, here thus refer to the extremely blissful and peaceful wisdom understanding selflessness. Such a state or sphere of understanding is called dbyings, i.e., the state of primordial purity free of eight extremes, which has two selflessnesses - the selflessness of person and selflessness of phenomena. These two selflessnesses are immutable and unchangeable. Abiding in deep absorption into these two selflessnesses is to abide in the state of selflessness. "You display infinite multitude dance of illusion" refers to the various projections of manifestations or appearances of his root guru according to the need of his disciples. Multitude also refer to various disciples, i.e., the different levels of disciples. Just as an Indian magician hawking in the street displays various things out of his art of magic instantaneously, the root guru displays different manifestations suitable to the needs of his disciples.

The two lines explained word by word show the perfection of two goals, the perfection of one's own and others' purposes. Which of the two lines represents the perfection of one's own purposes? The line, "Being immutable from the sphere of peace and great bliss," of primordial purity signified by the Truth Body (Dharmakaya) represents the perfection of one's own purpose. The line, "You display an infinite multitude dance of illusion," represents the perfection of others' purposes signified by the Form Body (Rupakaya) of a Buddha. These two aspects of a Buddha, the Dharmakaya and Rupakaya, are mutually dependent and inseparable like the two wings needed by a bird to fly in the sky. These two are complementary to each other. Both are equally necessary and are attained at the same time by a person at the time of becoming a Buddha, except that they are individually meant for different
purposes.

The line, "The bestowal of all energy, benefit and happiness," represents higher attainments and enlightened activities. There are five enlightened activities associated with the body, speech, mind, quality and activity. The author here praises the activity aspect of his root guru, Sangdak Trinley as is shown by the line. "I make prostration to my Guru, the entity of Three Jewels." Such a guru who possesses the qualities mentioned above is he who is outwardly the entity of the three objects of refuge - the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha - internally the entity of the three roots - guru, meditational deity and dakinis - and secretly the entity of the body, speech and mind of all the Buddhas. To you I prostrate and pay my homage. This completes the explanation concerning the modes of paying obeisance to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in general and his root guru, Sangdak Trinley in particular.

**Promise to compose**

Next is the promise to compose. This is contained in the following line, "I shall hereby elucidate the stages of the path...Into the Supreme City of Thorough Liberation." The city of cyclic existence refers to the three realms - the desire, form, and formless realm - all of which, though they appear to be very pleasant, beautiful and attractive, if one were to analyze them, are no other than a can of worms or a place of blazing fire or a realm of cannibals and spirits. We have been roaming about within this city of samsara from beginningless time until today and have not been able to gain anything essentially constructive, not even kind-heartedness.

Thus the author warns us that if we do not try our best to liberate ourselves from this city of existence using this human rebirth, it will be extremely difficult to find such a rebirth of leisure and freedom. The author, therefore, promises to compose this text for the fortunate disciples who have opportunity to listen to it and make effort to attain complete enlightenment. This is his purpose of writing this text. He also exhorts his disciples to put their efforts towards gaining enlightenment within one life time rather than after many live times
to come.

The author thus promises to compose a text metaphorically entitled the Jewel Ladder. Although we can explain this verse of promise to compose under four titles - the purpose (dgos-pa), subject matter (brjod-byā), ultimate purpose (nying-dgos) and link (brel-ba), we may summarize these into two, which are in order that whatever interferences remain may be removed and that the composition of this text is complete. Up to this, the preliminary requirements for explaining this text, i.e., making obeisance and promise to compose, have been completed.

Preliminaries of the actual text

According to the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, it is customary to explain a text or a topic in three ways: 1) laying of the ground topics in the manner of the leaping of a tiger jumping from one hill to another. Just as a tiger covers a certain extent of space in each jump, similarly every ground topic covers a topic of discussion. 2) explanation of the text word by word in the manner of the pace of a tortoise’s gait. This refers to the manner of explaining the text literally from the beginning to the end. 3) conclusion of the text in the manner of a lion’s gait. This is likened to the manner in which a lion moves. Whenever a lion climbs up or down the hill, it has the habit of gazing back once in a majestic manner; similarly, at the conclusion of the text the title of the text is repeated. These three points are also a salient feature of every little smaller segment of discussion of the text. We shall not repeat in every discussion, but must know that this is the nature of explanation.

Next concerns preliminaries of the text itself. This has two parts, the preliminaries to the actual text and the main text itself. The first has two: 1. how a disciple must listen to a discourse, and 2. how a teacher must explain it. First has two: a) how to maintain proper motivation, and b) how to maintain proper behaviour. The first explains how to set proper motivation or attitudes while listening to a discourse and the second how to behave physically and verbally.
How a disciple must listen to a discourse

Regarding setting of proper motivation, in Nyingma tradition, besides the need to abandon the three faults of a vessel (snod-kyi skyon gsum) and cultivation of the four attitudes ('du-shes bzhi), the generation of two modes of attitudes are of particular importance. They are: 1) the extensive motivation dealing with how to generate the mind of enlightenment and 2) the extensive means concerning the secret mantrayana vehicle.

Extensive motivation - generation of mind of enlightenment

The mind of enlightenment is a genuine attitude wishing to attain Buddhahood for the sake of other sentient beings. Just as Abhisamayalamkara says:

Generating the mind is for the welfare of others.

There are different types of the mind of enlightenment. The king-like mind of enlightenment seeks to fulfill one's goal first. A person who cherishes this type of mind thinks that, just as a king must first have all the means, both material and human resources, in order to serve his subjects, similarly, he wishes- "I must attain the state of Buddhahood first so that I am able to lead other sentient beings to the state of Buddhahood." Then there is the mind of enlightenment like a ferry-man. A ferry-man accompanies his passengers on the boat from the start of the journey until they reach their destination. Similarly there are those who generate the mind of enlightenment thinking, "I must attain the state of Buddhahood together with all other sentient beings." Such a generation of the mind of enlightenment becomes like a ferry-man. Yet another type of it is called the herdsman like mind of enlightenment. Just as a person who herds his cattle and grazes them ahead of him to pasture lands and protects them from the danger of wild animals and places more importance on his animals than himself, similarly, a person who generates the mind of enlightenment thinking, "How I wish the infinite sentient
beings to attain the state of Buddhahood before myself," practices the
generation of the herdsman-like mind of enlightenment. In cultivating
such an unselfish attitude, we see the distinction between a
practitioner of a greater vehicle and lesser vehicle. Generally
speaking, this distinction was not intentionally made by Buddha
Shakyamuni; however, it evolved due to the different levels of scope
of mind of the disciples.

There is another way of dividing this mind of enlightenment from
the perspective of levels of attainment a person may have reached.
This has four levels: 1) the mind of enlightenment preoccupied by
faith 2) the mind of enlightenment with resolute intention 3) the fully
ripened mind of enlightenment and 4) the mind of enlightenment free
of obscurations. The first is explained this way. As we all know, there
are the five paths and ten grounds as the stages and paths to travel
on to the path of complete enlightenment. A greater vehicle practi-
tioner with sharp faculty first begins by entering the path of
accumulation then the path of preparation. The mind of enlighten-
ment extant on these two paths, the first and second, is called the
mind of enlightenment preoccupied by faith because the mind of
enlightenment generated here is not gained through analytical
meditation but primarily by faith in the instruction imparted by his
spiritual master.

Second, the mind of enlightenment with resolute intention exists
from the first ground, which is simultaneously gained on the path of
seeing, up to the seventh ground, because the Bodhisattva on these
grounds has a very strong natural mind of enlightenment free of
attachment. The third, fully ripened mind of enlightenment, exists
from the eighth to tenth grounds of a Bodhisattva. Here the mind of
enlightenment is called fully ripened mind of enlightenment because
a Bodhisattva on these three grounds is even willing to give away his
body, limbs or head. The fourth type of mind of enlightenment, called
the mind of enlightenment free of all obscurations, exists only at the
stage of Buddhahood, because only a Buddha is totally free of all
karmic delusions and propensities of delusions.

The mind of enlightenment is also divided into two by its nature,
the conventional and ultimate. The conventional mind of enlighten-
ment is further divided into two, the aspiring and venturing mind of
enlightenment. The first is divided into two from the perspective of its goals and the second into two with respect to its purposes. The two goals are attainment of one's resultant Buddhahood and that of others'. The two purposes are the fulfilment of one's and others' purposes. In other words, these are the Dharmakaya and Rupakaya aspect of a Buddha's being. The mind of enlightenment is in fact a very strong will power dedicated to the attainment of Buddhahood. It is therefore, of utmost importance to be able to generate this mind. If our activities are conjoined by this will power, naturally virtues will ensue, and the benefit will be immense.

To give an ancillary comment here, we know that basically the world in which we live consists of three types of phenomena, those with life but lacking mind, those with both life and mind, and those with neither. To the first category belong plants, grasses, and trees and living things that grow and mature like us but lack mind. The second category of phenomena are human beings, animals, insects and others, and the third, for instance, are automobiles, furniture and others. Living things like trees and plants never quarrel or fight each other, but find a place to which they accommodate and adjust themselves, letting themselves and others grow as well. It is, therefore, pointless to count these as the object of compassion. The objects with respect to whom we generate compassion are those with both life and mind, known as sentient beings. They struggle for finding happiness and getting rid of sufferings. In Buddhism, they are known as migrators, for they migrate and transmigrate from one life to another.

The teaching and meditation on how to cultivate compassion has two traditions, the exoteric and esoteric means. The exoteric method also has many, but the most common path is to meditate on recognition of sentient beings as one's mother, their kindness, heart warming love, and compassion. What is meant by love here? It is a strong will power wishing all sentient beings to be endowed with happiness and the causes of happiness, just as a mother with only one child endorses all her love and care towards him. When this kind of love matures to its fullest extent, it transforms into compassion, wishing others to be free from sufferings; and their causes. However, a great compassion is even stronger; it extends towards all sentient beings. To give an
analogy, just as a mother with crippled hands would feel and try desperately at any cost to save her only son from falling into a fire pit forgetting everything of her own, similarly should be the urgency of one's great compassion towards all sentient beings, wishing to save them from sufferings and the causes of suffering. Great compassion is then enforced through the generation of a superior thought, a resolute intention willing to take sole responsibility to free all sentient beings from the sufferings of cyclic existence as well the causes of sufferings, thereby providing them with the causes of happiness and joy. It is this intention that impels a person to carry out out his practice of compassion following the footsteps of the sons of Buddhas - the Bodhisattvas.

Steps towards the fulfillment of this goal are first, taking the oath of aspiring mind of enlightenment through a ceremony, and, secondly, to uphold the mind of enlightenment by engaging in the practices of the six perfections. In other words, these two minds of enlightenment are practised by observing their precepts to be explained later. We have also dealt with the definition and kinds of the mind of enlightenment earlier. Bodhicitta or the mind of enlightenment is the demarcation to decide whether or not one is a true Mahayanist, that is to say, a follower of Bodhisattva practices.

Esoteric meditation on compassion concerns invocation and self-visualization of compassion deities of different levels. Compassion results in the generation of resolute intention (lha-g-csams), which ensures the cultivation of a natural mind of enlightenment. The moment a practitioner attains the mind of enlightenment, at the same time he has the path of accumulation and becomes a Bodhisattva. Next he attains the path of preparation. On these two paths, very natural and instinctive aspiring and venturing mind of enlightenment are generated, and he also has a conceptual understanding of emptiness. The moment he is able to unfold his experience of emptiness into a non-conceptual and direct understanding, seeing emptiness as it is, his mind of enlightenment transforms into an ultimate mind of enlightenment. Simultaneously he gains the third of the five paths, the path of seeing. Henceforth he is known as a noble being (Arya). Therefore, we now know that the ultimate mind of enlightenment is a result of the conventional mind of enlightenment and cannot be
generated through relying on ritual, blessings, initiation, or by virtue of being a monk. Ultimate mind of enlightenment can only be generated through meditation.

The three lineages - the profound lineage of the view originating from the great Nagarjuna, the lineage of extensive practice originating from Arya Asanga and later through the great masters of each tradition such as the great Longchen Ramjampa of Nyingma, the five foremost masters of the Sakya, the great Marpa, Milarepa and Gampopa of the Kagyud and the great Tsong Khapa of the Gelug tradition are combined into a lineage called the Blessed Practice lineage originating from Buddha Vajradhara. The uniqueness of each tradition of Tibetan Buddhism lies in its blessed lineage. It is within the practice of this lineage that a person receives the Bodhisattva vows; i.e., he generates the conventional mind of enlightenment only through ceremony. I believe that most of you have had the opportunity to receive the Bodhisattva vows several times from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is an incomparable master, but it is not merely enough to think, "how fortunate are we." We must try to put his advice into practice. The rites for the generation of mind of enlightenment appear in many texts, but the most common text is the following verse from *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva, which says:

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Just as the previous Sugatas
Gave birth to an Awakening Mind,
And just as they successively dwelt
In the Bodhisattva practices;
Likewise for the sake of all that lives
Do I give birth to an Awakening Mind,
And likewise shall I too
Successively follow the practices.
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Simply generating the mind of enlightenment each day does not require recitation of the verse; one may just activate the thought. To try to become a Bodhisattva without cultivating the mind of enlightenment is foolish attempt. Lacking this, even if you remain in isolation in strict meditation for months and years, no doubt you may
achieve something, but you will never become a Bodhisattva and ultimately a Buddha. Even if one is a great scholar learned in the five major texts of the Gelug, the eighteen major texts of the Sakya, the twelve major of the Kagyud or the thirteen of the Nyingma, with an excellent command of all, without the mind of enlightenment, one is like a great Hedonist scholar, arrogant and egotistic. If you simply gain arrogance and pride out of all these years of study and training, what significant use do they have? Therefore, the mind of enlightenment is the root of all Bodhisattavic qualities.

Precepts of the aspiring mind of enlightenment

Let us now discuss the precepts of the aspiring mind of enlightenment which are:

1) equalising self with others
2) exchanging self with others and
3) cherishing others more than oneself.

First, to practice equalising self with others, think, no matter whether one accepts any religion or not, all sentient from the largest elephant to the tiniest ant desire happiness and do not wish to experience suffering. In this respect all sentient beings are equal. Aren’t they? Both self and others roam about in the cyclic existence or beyond. Beyond refers to the states of peace or liberation of the Hearers, the Solitary Realizers or the ultimate state of peace, the state of Buddhahood. The attitude of equalising self with others is in fact to realize through repeated contemplation and meditation that all sentient beings truly wish happiness and not suffering and that all are equal in this respect.

Second, exchanging self with others might be difficult practice for a beginner, but for convenience sake it is advised to keep the scope of one’s visualization small by taking an ailing person you are familiar with. While meditating: think as you breathe in that you absorb all his sufferings and the causes of suffering in the form of black rays of light dissolving into you; and while you breathe out, think that you give away all your wholesome qualities, happiness and virtuous energy
in the form of white rays of light dissolving into him. Think that this process of meditation technique has relieved him of all his sufferings and he is endowed with happinesses. This is a simple and effective meditation for exchanging self with others. These two meditation techniques are recommended for persons of initial and intermediate scope. The person of advanced scope may practice deeper levels of meditation of exchanging self with others. There are those who have the power or energy to literally exchange self with others through meditation techniques. To give an example, once when Lama Maitriyoga (byams-pa'i rnal-'byor), the teacher of Atisha the great, was giving a public discourse he saw a person who hit a dog with a stone. The Lama immediately fell down from his throne crying "Ah-na-na" while at the same time thinking, "how unkind it was of the man and others present there being indifferent to it." Everyone gathered there was taken by surprise, wondering what had actually happened to the lama. The lama then showed his shoulder which was hurt exactly where the dog should have been hurt. But the dog was found roaming about painlessly to everyone's surprise. In fact Maitriyoga immediately applied the meditation technique of exchanging self with others and proved that he was a skilled practitioner of such a meditation. Such is the power of a practitioner of advanced level to exchange self with others. Similarly, once the Indian Pandit Dharmaraksita, who was actually a Hinayanist and lacked insight into emptiness, is said to have met a person one of whose thighs was rotten. Dharmaraksita, with his compassionate attitude, slashed a piece of flesh out of his own thigh and replaced it for the damaged portion of the man through meditation.

These are actual practices of exchanging self with others. These masters are able to do such practices because they possess the armour of effort, the stability of concentration and above all the great compassion and will power. If we strive constantly with dedication, we shall also reach such a stage.

Third, when a person practices the two - equalising and exchanging self with others - he is also practising how to cherish others more than oneself. Briefly, let us say that we have finished discussing the three precepts of the aspiring mind of enlightenment.
Precepts of the venturing mind of enlightenment

There are six precepts of the venturing mind of enlightenment which are otherwise known as the six perfections. These are: 1) generosity 2) morality 3) patience 4) enthusiastic perseverance 5) single pointed concentration and 6) wisdom. The first five perfections are causes for accumulation of merits (bsod-nams-kyi tsogs) and the sixth is a cause for the accumulation of insight (ye-shes-kyi tsogs).14

Perfection of generosity

The first, perfection of giving or generosity, is of three types: 1) giving of material aid 2) giving of dharma 3) giving of protection from fear. Giving material aid has three -giving, great giving and extremely great giving. With regard to the first, it appears in the Confession Sutra, in which there is a line in the recitation that says, "by virtue of my giving even a morsel of food to a being born as an animal and..." Such acts of giving or even giving of a single coin to a beggar constitute the modest giving of material help. Second, what is a great giving? It is, for instance, the giving away of kingdom by a king or giving of an elephant and bride etc., giving of reasonably valuable things. The third type of giving, called the extremely great giving, is, for instance, a Bodhisattva's giving of his head, arms and even life by virtue of his commitment.

The second type of giving, the giving of dharma, involves imparting spiritual teachings, like giving introduction to Buddhism, teachings on the refuge, cultivation of compassion, explanation on the law of causality as well as the esoteric nature of teachings. Though it is difficult to say who is and who isn't practising this kind of giving, practising this with kind heart is of primary importance. Practicable for us would be to chant mantras such as OM MANI PADME HUM to the ear of a dying person and giving spiritual therapy to people overcome with mental problems.

The third, the giving of protection from fear, constitutes such actions as protecting others from death, saving someone from facing a death sentence or buying creatures from the hands of butchers at the slaughterhouse. The simplest way of practising this for us would
be to save worms and insects on the road by transferring them to a safer place. All such activities constitute giving of protection from fear.

**Perfection of morality**

The perfection of morality is of three kinds: 1) morality of abstention from negative actions 2) morality of integrating virtues or wholesome dharma and 3) morality of working for the welfare of other sentient beings.

What is the meaning of the first type of morality? This must be understood as having two aspects- misdeeds by nature and by law of Buddha. Misdeeds by nature are negativities such as killing, stealing and telling lies which are universally considered as non-virtues; however, misdeeds by law of Buddha are the wrong doings that constitute transgression of one's commitment to vows and precepts. There are, for instance, the eight types of individual liberation vows. Amongst these are five vows of a lay person; thirty six of a novice monk or nun; two hundred and fifty three of a fully ordained monk, eighteen root vows and forty six secondary vows of a Bodhisattva, and fourteen root, eight auxiliary and two secondary vows of the tantra. The intention to abstain from committing both the misdeeds by nature and law of Buddha becomes the morality of abstention from negativities.

Second, the morality of integrating virtues, is to make efforts in collecting every single small virtue, no matter how insignificant it may be. In order to achieve this, one must always be vigilant of one's mindfulness and conscientiousness in all walks of one's life, even to the extend of answering somebody's question gently with good heart, bowing with respectful heart to senior spiritual friends. In this way, ever following the precepts of those to be cultivated and abandoned with alertness and immediate application of wisdom and conscience, one enhances his virtuous forces.

Third, the morality of working for the welfare of other sentient beings involves, for an advanced spiritual friend, benefitting sentient beings by means of four ways of collecting disciples - giving whatever is needed, speaking pleasantly, practising what you teach others to do,
and showing examples through one's own deeds, thus conforming
your speech and deeds. But for a person of initial scope, it is to
benefit sentient beings by way of giving advice, helping others in
carrying their loads, and dedicating the virtues of others. All these
constitute the morality of helping others.

Perfection of patience

The third perfection of patience, is of three types:
First, the patience of not retaliating harm inflicted by others, e.g.
remaining unmoved even though someone to whom you have given
much returns your kindness with harm only.

Second, the patience of willingly undergoing hardships, which
means facing hardships of heat, cold, and lack of necessities for the
sake of dharma practice and to remain unwavering and determined
in all circumstances in carrying out one's spiritual goals.

Third, the patience of not being frightened by the meaning of
profundity, which means encountering fear and anxiety in
understanding the meaning of emptiness or the fears caused by
interferences from spirits and negative forces while practising dharma
for ordinary persons.

Perfection of enthusiastic perseverance

The fourth perfection, of effort or enthusiastic perseverance, is of
three types:

First, the armour-like effort refers to taking examples of
Bodhisattvas and adepts and taking inspiration and guidance following
their examples to assist oneself in advancing through the paths of
practices. It also refers to generation of strong will-power and
committing oneself unfailingly towards achieving goals, even at the
cost of one's life. Preparing oneself for one's spiritual uplift in this
way becomes making armour-like effort.

Second, the effort of practical application or practice means
cultivating the habit of continual dedication by giving up the habit of
procrastinating one's practice, not leaving it by saying, 'I shall start it
tomorrow or the next month etc." Delaying one's practices this way makes impossible the finding of an appropriate time to carry out dharma practices. One must be prompt and practical to carry out one's practices.

Third, the insatiable effort, as the name itself suggests, means that one must not remain content with whatever progress one has made; for instance, one must not remain content with just one time teaching on the same topic but must be willing to receive the same teaching again. Similarly, even if one has chanted a particular mantra a hundred thousand times in a retreat practice, one must not give up doing the same practice again. In this way, remaining not contented but repeatedly doing it becomes the practice of insatiable effort.

Perfection of concentration

Fifth, the perfection of concentration, also is of three types:

First, the concentration generating the joy like that of a child means maintaining concentration on one's object of meditation fixated as a child is obsessed with his favourite toy.

Second, the concentration distinguishing the meaning means that we must realize that grasping at self identity is the root of all suffering and that the wisdom understanding emptiness is the direct antidote to it. There are instances when a meditator on emptiness generates strong but subtle emotional attachment at the experience of vacuity, misunderstanding such an experience as emptiness. This becomes an obstacle, and understanding this as an obstacle becomes a concentration distinguishing the meaning.

Third, the concentration of a Tathagata is the unmistaken awareness of the ultimate reality of all phenomena as it is, which also sees the conventional phenomena at the same time.

Perfection of wisdom

Finally, the perfection of wisdom, also is of three types. 1) wisdom acquired through hearing 2) wisdom acquired through contemplation and 3) wisdom acquired through meditation.

The first is the understanding of teachings received from one's
teacher. This helps one to cast away doubts, misunderstandings and ambiguity about the meaning of teachings. This results through tremendous study and learning of the teachings by academic or non-academic approach.

The second is the ability to discriminate and investigate the teachings through using one's understanding, checking it against the original teaching and texts to see whether it confirms with the reality or not. This involves repeated formal or informal scanning and reviewing of those one has studies.

The third type of wisdom is the experience, insight and realization gained as a result of one's meditation. The siddhi, blessings and visions of one's spiritual master, meditational deities, and the inner ecstasy and peace are all wisdom gained through meditation.

**Benefits of the mind of enlightenment**

The benefits of mind of enlightenment can be found in many texts of the Gelug, Sakya, Kagyud and Nyingma; and the quality of having generated this mind has been explained by the great master Dza Patrul Rinpoche who said:

If you possess this (mind) you are directed towards the achievement of Buddhahood.
If you lack this you must cultivate the means to achieve Buddhahood.
May all generate the immaculate mind of enlighenment
The unmistaken seed of becoming a Buddha.

As is clear from the above, the mind of enlightenment is like the pivot part of a machine, without which, the machine cannot function. If you have this good heart, the paths and grounds you achieve will be superior, and, if you lack it, even those will become inferior, because it is this kind heart that determines our destiny. Everything that leads to either happiness or suffering in this universe is basically the product of our mind. It is the human intellect that produced
everything from nuclear disaster to heart transplantation.

For a traditional explanation and understanding of the benefits, I shall simply refer you to the first chapter of *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva. Consistent effort and dedication for its cultivation through reflection on the benefits is extremely important. In this context it would be useful to tell how Arya Asanga made effort to receive a vision of Maitreya. He meditated for twelve years, but had not even had a good dream over these years. Finally, being very depressed, one day he decided to leave his cave, and on the way he met a dog, the upper part of whose body was covered with sores and wounds and the lower infested with worms and oozing smell. Seeing the condition of the dog, he suddenly produced a strong instinctive compassion and thought, "How can I help this dog by relieving her suffering?" Finally, he decided to lick at the infested portion of the dog's body so that both the worms as well as the dog were not injured. As soon as he closed his eyes and went closer to the dog to suck worms, to his surprise, he found that the dog had disappeared and instead Lord Maitreya appeared before him. He then asked Maitreya, "Where have you been over these years? Why you did not appear to me?" Maitreya replied, "I was with you all the time, but due to your bad karma, you could not see me. Today you have generated a pure compassion, and that is why you are able to see me." From this we learn that pure intention, patience and dedication must accompany our practices. Therefore, generating the mind of enlightenment is also no exception. In short we can summarise the benefits of the mind of enlightenment as *A Guide to Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

What need is there to explain more,
The Childish work for their own benefit
The Buddhas work for the welfare of others
Just look at the difference between them

This concludes discussing the generation of extensive motivation, the mind of enlightenment.
Extensive means - generating motivation according to secret mantrayana tradition

We shall now discuss the extensive means of generating motivation according to secret mantrayana vehicle teachings. It is said, "Buddha dwells in those who have strong faith," this, in other words, tells us two things, the mode of taking faith as a path and the mode of taking aspiration as a path.

Taking faith as a path

Practising the mode of taking faith as a path involves some techniques of meditation. These meditation must fulfill the five excellent features, which are: 1) excellent abode or environment. This entails transforming the surrounding either into a) the copper coloured abode of Guru Padmasambhava b) the blissful abode of Amitabha Buddha or c) Mount Potala, the abode of Arya Avalokiteshvara. 2) the excellent teacher. This corresponds to the three visualizations mentioned above. If you have visualised your surrounding to be the abode of Padmasambhava, then you must think of your teacher as being Guru Padmasambhava; if the environment has been visualized as the abode of Amitabha Buddha, you must think of your teacher to be Amitabha Buddha; and if you have visualized Mount Potala, then you must think of your teacher as being Arya Avalokiteshvara. 3) the excellent disciples.

If you have visualized Guru Padmasambhava then visualize that those listening to his teachings are the twenty-five direct disciples, the eighty Mahasiddha, the hundred and eight treasure revealers. Visualize, surrounding Amitabha Buddha, the great Bodhisattvas, both male and female, attending to his teachings; and for Arya Avalokiteshvara, visualize the eight chief disciples, all being Bodhisattvas with higher levels of attainments. 4) the excellent dharma. If you have visualized Guru Padmasambhava as the teacher, then the teachings you receive would be the Great Perfection Atiyoga cycle; for those who have chosen Amitabha Buddha as the teacher, the teachings will be the Three Baskets of teachings, the set of discourses, the vinaya and abhidharma; and for visualizing Arya
Avalokiteshvara, the teachings to be received will be instructions on generation of love, compassion and the mind of enlightenment with emphasis on the three main practices of a Bodhisattva which are meditation on how to equalise self with other, exchange self with others and cherish others more than oneself. 5) the excellent time. You must think that the time transcends the limitation of the three periods - past, present and future - or the four seasons and that the time is limitless in its primordial purity. These are thus the five excellent features to be incorporated while practising the mode of taking faith into a path. The details on how to actually carry out these meditations must be learned under the guidance of a qualified master who holds the lineage undiminished.

Taking aspiration as a path

Next, how to take aspiration as a path primarily concerns invoking interest in oneself towards achieving Buddhahood, realising the fact that the seed of Buddhahood is present is all sentient beings. As the King of Concentration Sutra says, "The essence of Tathagata is universally present in all sentient beings," which means that all sentient beings, including the tiniest insects and worms, are endowed with the Buddha nature, the potentiality to become a Buddha. The Tantra of Dual Analysis also states, "Sentient beings are Buddhas; however, they are inflicted with adventitious delusions, which, when removed, become Buddhas." This also means that all beings have the essential seed for becoming a Buddha, but their minds are concealed under dualistic appearances and misconceptions, and that when these obscurations are cleared away through proper means, sentient beings throughout the expanse of space becomes Buddha. Knowing this, whenever we meditate on compassion, we must at the outset remind ourselves of this fact, which will help us strengthen our spirit.

In Nyingma tradition, an aspiration to achieve Buddhahood must fulfill three feature, which are: 1) realizing that one has the primordial wisdom to become a Buddha 2) realizing that this wisdom is the Dharmakaya and 3) realizing that this entails the four forms of a Buddha's being (four kayas). The details of these involves extremely secret tantric practices.
To conclude, generation of extensive method by means of secret mantrayana practices primarily comes through making the Buddha nature manifest employing tantric practices. When an individual actually engages in tantrayana practices, then he employs speedier means such as meditation of deity yoga, activating energy wind, channels and regenerative drops. These topics are taught only to advanced level of disciples who have already gained some experience of the basic practices. These we can study sometimes later. With this, we conclude the modes of generating extensive motivation and means under the heading of how to cultivate proper motivation when a disciple listens to a discourse.

**Behaviour**

Next is how to maintain proper behaviour while listening to a teaching. There are behaviours of two kinds: those to be abandoned and those to be cultivated.

Those to be abandoned are: 1) the three faults of a vessel\(^1\) 2) the six wrong attitudes\(^2\) and 3) the five faults of comprehension\(^3\). Those that are to be cultivated are: 1) the four attitudes\(^4\) 2) the six perfections in conjunction with the six preparatory practices\(^5\) and 3) miscellaneous other behaviours\(^6\) to be maintained. No matter which of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism you follow, the above norms are fundamentally the same. You become a proper receptacle when you follow these disciplines and the blessing and energy received are stronger. Buddha has said, "Oh disciples, pay attention, contemplate and I shall teach." This clearly shows how important it is to maintain proper motivation as well as the behaviours. This concludes the topic how a disciple must listen to a discourse.

**How a teacher must give a discourse**

Now let us discuss how a teacher must give a discourse. There are three traditions: 1) how an Arhat gives a discourse 2) how a Pandita or master scholar gives a discourse and 3) how a Buddha gives a discourse.

An Arhat gives teaching by maintaining three principles, which
are: a) He gives teaching only to a fully characterised listener, b) His teachings are verbally and literally very clear and c) The subject matter of his teachings are pure and authentic, with no personal interpretation.

A Pandita follows either the tradition of Vikramalashila or that of Nalanda university. The Vikramalashila tradition has two special qualities: a) It aims at making the listener a fully characterised disciple and b) Teaches in order that the disciples understand the different aspects of Buddha's doctrine.

The Nalanda University tradition, however, emphasizes that: a) all exoteric and esoteric teachings of Buddha are taught with the five excellent features fulfilled (See page 72) and b) all teachings on treatises are given by considering the five modes of composing a treatise, which are: 1) the author 2) the purpose 3) the category to which it belongs 4) the sources and its authenticity and 5) a summary of the text. All the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism basically follow the tradition of the Nalanda University. Consequently, the author of this text is the great treasure master, Minling Gurmed Dorjee; the purpose of this text is to explain the entire range of introductory teaching to an individual wishing to attain liberation and omniscience; the category to which the text belongs is Mahayana teachings; its sources are the Three Baskets of teachings; and finally the summary of the text has eight essential points in two categories.

A) The four modes of transforming the mind, referred to here as the four common points, that are:

1) realizing the difficulty of finding precious human rebirth endowed with eight freedoms or leisures and ten endowments
2) reflection on death and impermanence
3) faults of cyclic existence and
4) reflection on the law of causality.

B) The four uncommon points which concern the four noble truths, that are:

1) the truth of suffering
2) the truth of origin of suffering
3) the truth of cessation and
4) the truth of path to cessation.

These will be discussed later in detail.

This now concludes the two preliminaries to the actual body of the text: I) how a disciple must listen to a discourse and II) how a teacher must give a discourse.

The actual body of the text

Next the text introduces us that in general, all sentient beings from beginningless time possess the Buddha nature, and this must be manifested. However, the speed of its manifestation depends on the level of the scope of an individual's mind. This Buddha nature is made to manifest in two ways according to this text:

1) how a person of initial scope of mind travels gradually on the paths by following the tradition of hearing, contemplation and meditation, and
2) how a person of advanced scope travels on the paths by leaps with faith and respect.

These two ways are otherwise known as the paths of sutra tradition and tantra tradition. This distinction of the persons of initial and advanced scopes of mind was not made by Buddha based on any caste, creed, social divisions or otherwise, but this classification was the need of the disciples.

Three scopes of person

We naturally find that there are people who show remarkable inborn signs of learnedness, and spiritual maturity even without or with the same training, and on the other hand, some are naturally dull and have to make strong efforts for success in their training. The persons for whom this teaching is meant must train to gain the three types of
interest in reliance upon three lacks of attachment. In this way, we have the persons of three scopes - initial, intermediate and advanced.

What is the first lack of attachment and interest? As the text says, "Through contemplating the rarity......is generated." Contemplating the difficulty of finding precious human rebirth of eight freedoms and ten endowments, and its being impermanent (see: pp.89), one who wishes to be free of three states of bad rebirth - hell, hungry ghosts and animal (See page 100) and attain higher rebirths either as a god or human becomes a person of initial scope. Such a person has the first lack of attachment and interest.

Contemplating the working of the law of causality (see: pp.138) and the sufferings of the six types of beings within cyclic existence (see: pp. 99), one who generates a great anxiety and fear of cyclic existence, seeing it as a pit of burning embers or a nest of cobras or a home of cannibals, and wishes to attain the state of liberation from cyclic existence becomes a person of intermediate scope. Such a person has the second lack of attachment and interest. According to the text, "Through contemplating the suffering of cyclic existence and....is generated."

Meditating on love, compassion, mind of enlightenment and their benefits, one who sacrifices his own interests but works for the fulfilment of the ultimate purposes of others which is the attainment of Buddhahood, is a person of advanced scope. He has the third lack of attachment and interest. According to the text, "Through contemplating love, compassion and the mind of enlightenment....is generated."

The three types of persons can also be described through an analogy. Take the example of three persons going together up the hill to Tsuglagkhang from the Library. Though they walk together, they may have different motivations to go to the temple. The first may be thinking, I am going to the temple to offer a few rounds of circumambulation and make prayers to build enough store of merit whenever I have an opportunity like this, for I only wish that I am reborn as a god or a human being after death; there are the three bad realms of hells, hungry ghosts and animals in which if I am born the sufferings to be encountered will be beyond imagination, and I cannot bear this. By virtue of his motivation, he becomes a person of initial scope of mind (skye-bu chung-ngu).
The second person may be thinking, I want to go to the temple in order to make circumambulation and prayers because I wish to be free of sufferings of not only the three bad migrators but also of the three happy migrators - gods, humans and demi-gods - and attain the state of liberation. By virtue of his mode of thinking, he becomes a person of intermediate scope (skye-bu 'bring).

And the third person may have set the motivation of going to the temple wishing to accumulate virtuous energy in order to gain freedom from cyclic existence not only for himself alone but also for all other sentient beings, and finally to lead them to the state of Buddhahood. He conjoins his motivation with a greater scope of mind extending to all sentient beings, and by virtue of this, he becomes a person of advanced scope (skye-bu chen-po). However, if a fourth person were to accompany them but without a definite goal and intention, he would be no different than a stray dog. Hence in Buddhism a person's attitude plays a primary role in deciding his or her spiritual rank and also the ripening of the fruits of an action. We may in general correspond the above given example of people with different level of motivation to the initial, intermediate and advanced scope of person. Such qualities of an individual, to some extend, are propensities of past lives.

The special purpose of composing this text, according to the author, is mainly to teach the first category of disciples, the beginners, how to train on the paths to enlightenment, and not the advanced disciples. Hence, this teaching is meant for the general audience, the majority. All the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism, the Kagyu, Sakya, Gelug and Nyingma unanimously agree on the four fundamental points of turning one's mind to spiritual practice, which are contemplation of: a) difficulty of finding a precious human rebirth b) death and impermanence c) faults of cyclic existence, and d) law of cause and effect. These are the basic points of practice for a commoner, a person of initial scope. In Nyingma tradition, these four points are known as the four means of transforming one's mind, because, unless we have a fertile mind through these trainings, we cannot become a successful practitioner. Therefore, these points of practice become essential for the training of a person's mind, to make it conducive to dharma practice.
The Four Common Points

Let us now study the four common points of the text which are:

1. contemplating the difficulty of finding a precious human rebirth, attributed with freedoms and leisures
2. contemplating its impermanence
3. contemplating the drawbacks of cyclic existence and
4. contemplating the law of cause and effect.

The difficulty of finding a precious human rebirth

The contemplation on difficulty of finding a precious human rebirth endowed with the freedoms and endowments has three parts:

1. recognition of the freedoms and endowments
2. contemplating the rarity of finding this precious human rebirth, and
3. the significance of this rebirth.

Recognizing the freedoms and endowments

The Tibetan words, <Del-jor> have different meanings. <Del> conveys the meaning of freedom or leisure, i.e. having freedom or leisure to practice dharma free of eight bondages. <Jor> stands for "Jorwa," meaning to be endowed with, that is to be attributed with, the ten endowments, the fertile basis of opportunities.

Freedom from the eight states of bondage are the four freedoms of non-human states and the four freedoms of a human. The four freedoms of non-human states are: freedom from being 1) in hell 2) a hungry ghost 3) an animal and 4) a long living god. We are free of these four bondages because we have obtained this precious human rebirth. The four freedoms from the bondage of being a human are: freedom from 1) holding wrong views 2) living in a place where Buddhas have not appeared 3) being mentally dull and 4) being born in an extreme place where the doctrine of the Buddha did not
flourish and the name of a Buddha is not even heard. Amongst these four, the holding of wrong views is most serious, and it is also something which we might easily generate for petty reasons of self discontentment. We must all take it cautiously. Being mentally dull includes being mute, deaf and having other serious physical infirmity. In my view, a mute person overcomes this flaw, for he is still able to carry out dharma practices despite his shortcoming. Hence, some physically impaired persons have more chances to carry out religious practices, and being mentally dull is not as serious as a wrong view. If one takes rebirth as one of three inferior beings - hell, hungry ghost and animal - one is tortured by immense sufferings which we shall deal with later (See page 100), and there is no opportunity to carry out dharma practices. The gods in the desire realm, within which there are six types,\(^27\) are distracted by their attachment to the inexhaustible objects of desire in the god realm and hence do not ever have a sense of remorse against their pleasure. This does not leave a cause to impel them with any opportunity to turn their minds to dharma. There are seventeen states of gods in the form realm\(^28\) and four in the formless realm.\(^29\)

All gods within the seventeen states solely remain attached to sensual pleasures, and the gods within the four states of the formless realms are deeply absorbed in their concentration much as people remain addicted to drugs, if not more strongly. In this way, the gods of the form and formless realms remain intoxicated in their pleasures and do not see or experience the shortcomings of cyclic existence.

If one takes rebirth in a place where Buddhas have not appeared, one lacks opportunity to carry out dharma practices, especially, if one is born during the twenty intermediate aeons between the formation and dissolution of the universe. According to Abhidharma, Buddhas do not appear during this period, and without a teacher, there is no teaching and practice.

When the teachings of the fourth teacher, Buddha Shakyamuni, degenerate, after and before the coming of the fifth Buddha Maitreya, the intermediate period also experiences absence of a Buddha. This period is also unfavourable to experiencing dharma. Irrespective of the appearance of Buddhas, rebirth in a barbaric land or in such directions where the Buddha dharma did not or does not
flourish, or in a place where even the name of a Buddha is not heard, precludes opportunity to do dharma practices. Besides, though you may be born in a place where the dharma flourishes but hold wrong views and assert the non-existence of past and future lives, the law of causality and other truths this again causes a serious threat to your future destination. Because of this, it is also considered an impediment. In the past, Buddha dharma flourished in India, and was transferred to Tibet; however, now in India itself, we find many people have a wrong impression of Buddhism. No wonder, even among Tibetans, nowadays, you will find a few people, especially among youngsters, who have no faith in the Dharma, and these people either talk ill of the dharma or keep a distance it. Many simply hold this attitude without having studied or even given themselves a chance to do so, and have generated wrong views, risking themselves, out of ignorance, with whatever consequences they might have to undergo. This is a pity. Being foolish and dull without understanding or misunderstanding what is to be cultivated or abandoned also becomes a bondage. The Tibetan word "Lenpa" refers to someone who has a weak intellect, and "Kugpa" refers not only to someone who is mute but also mentally dull. Hence, even though you are born as a human being, if you have the above explained drawbacks, you will lack opportunity to carry out dharma practices. This concludes the explanation of the four non-human and the four human bondages. Let me just quote the essential meaning of freedom from the eight bondages. The Akāśaratna sūtra says:

The Bodhisattva Akāśgarva asked,

Oh Tathagata, how shall I recognize the freedoms and endowments?

The Tathagata replied, when the mind is disturbed and distracted by extraneous thoughts, it is called busy, but when conceptualizations are pacified and the mind abides in its natural form it is called freedom.

This means keeping one's mind in peace free of distraction in its
natural state is called freedom. It has a heavy meaning. In the sutra called *Samudanana sutra*, it is said:

He who has overcome the eight bondages  
Shall always find freedom.

We shall now discuss the ten endowments. Usually, endowments are attributes of something which a person, a country or a family, etc., possesses. If a nation is endowed with economic wealth, it is considered wealthy, prosperous and a powerful. If a family has wealth, it is considered lucky, rich and respected in society. Similarly, if a person is endowed with the eight freedoms explained above and the ten endowments to be explained today, his rebirth is considered a precious one.

What are the ten endowments? These are the five personal conditions and the five circumstantial conditions.

The first five are: 1) being born as a human. This means not simply born as a human being, but a better human being. 2) being born in a central land, i.e., being born and brought up in a surrounding where the Dharma prevails.

During the time of Buddha, in ancient India, Bodhgaya was considered the central land both by boundary and by the dharma, because of the fact that it was the place where Buddha Shakyamuni gained full enlightenment, and Buddhism flourished there, hence becoming the foremost sacred place for all Buddhists. At present, India may be regarded as the central land only by boundary and not by dharma, since Buddhism has declined in India, among Indians. Tibet, before 1950, preserved the entire teachings of the Buddha and may be regarded as a central land both by boundary and the dharma. 3) having complete sense organs and limbs. It is not just enough to have been in a central land, one must also possess complete senses free of major defects. If a person is born blind, deaf or dumb, his accessibility to the dharma teachings is naturally limited. Also if you are dull, you have a very low intellect and are not able to understand what is being taught. However, a lame or crippled person's access to dharma is not blank. Some of them can be even brighter than a normal person. Nowadays, many physical inabilities can be overcome
to a certain degree through the use of technology. Braille, which is very common in the west, is a good example of science complementing the spiritual. 4) not indulging in extreme activities again, merely having complete senses is not enough. In our daily life, we meet with persons who have an instinct habituated to committing the acts of killing, harming, stealing and injuring others. Although these may not be regarded as extreme acts, they are still immoral. Extreme acts here refer to acts of patricide, matricide, killing of an Arhat, drawing blood from the body of a Buddha, and creating schism among the sangha community. 5) having faith and devotion to Buddha, dharma and sangha. Without faith and devotion, especially in doing tantric practices, there is no way for a person to become a successful dharma practitioner. These are the five personal endowments, the requirements of an individual to facilitate dharma practice.

The five circumstantial conditions or endowments appear naturally by virtue of one's prayers or karma, for those who already have the five personal endowments. They are: 1) The Buddha has appeared in this world, This is very important. If the Buddha had not come to this world, there would be no Buddhism. 2) We are fortunate that Buddha made his appearance on this earth and also taught the eighty-four thousand heaps of doctrine meant for making human beings better and wiser sentient beings. 3) We are born during a time when the life-span of the Buddha's teaching has not been exhausted. Buddhism is still flourishing. There are many among us who are qualified teachers and meditators, and both the sutra and tantra aspects of teachings survive. Especially fortunate are we to have teachers like His Holiness the Dalai Lama. 4) There are also sincere followers of Buddha Shakyamuni and a growing interest in Buddhism. There are teachers who hold the lineage and pass the transmission and disciples who practice. 5) Finally, perhaps the most important factor is the existence of compassionate benefactors. Fortunately, we have His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is himself an embodiment of compassion. Likewise we have many teachers and spiritual friends who guide their disciples with compassionate care. As such, we fulfill the ten endowments also.

The freedoms or leisures are like the basis, and the endowments are
features qualifying the basis. We must know that anybody who fulfills the eighteen qualities explained above has a precious human rebirth.

I remember that during a discourse His Holiness the Dalai Lama cited the Nyingma lama, Dodrup Tenpai Nyima, who made clear the distinction between a precious human rebirth and an unwholesome human rebirth. He mentioned that a person's rebirth can be regarded as precious only when, in addition to the pleasures and endowments, he has a kind heart and good manners. On the other hand, if a person has all the eighteen qualities but has a cruel heart and unruly behaviour, creating troubles both for himself and others, his rebirth is not precious but unwholesome. Shantideva's *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

So, if when having found leisure such as this,
I do not attune myself to what is wholesome,
There could be no greater deception
And there could be no greater folly.

Therefore, knowing this, it is very important that we try our best to generate an altruistic heart and good manner to make our precious human rebirth significant and meaningful.

*Rarity of finding a precious human rebirth*

If this question is raised - "Can this precious human rebirth of pleasures and endowments be found again?" The answer is, only with great difficulty. The difficulty or rarity of finding such a precious human rebirth is then explained by three ways: 1) by its causes 2) by analogy, and 3) by number.

How difficult it is to find this precious human rebirth by its causes is explained in the *Madhyamakavatara* text of Chandrakirti, where it says:

The cause of higher rebirth is morality and no other.

The fundamental cause of rebirth as a god or human being is pure morality. The practice of pure morality is the basis upon which many
other spiritual qualities also develop. What are then the moralities to be observed? If you are a one-day vow holder, you have eight vows to be observed, and if you are a layman vow-holder, you have five vows. A novice has thirty-six vows, and a fully ordained monk following the tradition of Mulasarvastivadin has 253 vows to be observed. For someone who has accepted the Bodhisattva precepts, there are the eighteen root vows and forty-six secondary vows. In tantra, let alone hundreds of precepts to be observed, without at least observing the twenty-four precepts associated with body, speech and mind, it is very difficult to find a precious human rebirth. However, those who have not committed to abide by a particular set of vows must observe the ten virtues to ensure a better human rebirth in the future.

The ten virtues are not a proscribed morality but are a natural moral principle acceptable to all, believers or non-believers of religion. Having laid the foundation for a better human rebirth through the observance of the moralities explained above, this must be complemented with the practices of the six perfections (see: pp. 66) and linked with pure aspirational prayers. It is said that only then the attainment of a precious human rebirth in the future is guaranteed.

To explain the difficulty of finding a precious human rebirth by means of examples, the great Nāgārjuna states:

More difficult than a turtle's finding a single yoke in an ocean.

Suppose that the entire world were a great ocean, in which there lived a blind turtle which rose to the surface only once every hundred years, and on the surface of that ocean were a golden yoke, with a single opening, driven about in every direction by the wind and currents of the ocean. The yoke has a hole but does not have a mind; though the turtle has a mind it cannot see the yoke. Imagine how difficult indeed it would be for the turtle to meet with the opening of that yoke, let alone inserting his neck into it. Even more difficult than that is to acquire a precious human rebirth. To give yet another example, suppose one were to take a handful of peas and throw them against a wall. It is nearly impossible that a single pea will remain stuck on the wall, and probably all will roll down. Similarly, our
chance of finding a precious human rebirth is extremely rare.

These examples are not meant to discourage anybody from trying to find a human rebirth in future lives but simply to demonstrate how difficult it is to find a fully characterised human rebirth if the causes and conditions are not properly accumulated. The great yogi Milarepa sang this line to a hunter called Kyira Dorjee:

Generally speaking it is so difficult
to find a human rebirth, but when
I see a person like you, it never surprises me.

Hearing these words from Milarepa, Kyira Dorjee generated very strong fear and was totally moved towards doing dharma practices and eventually became one of the prominent disciples of Milarepa.

Now, to explain the rarity of finding a precious human rebirth by numerical example. Buddha Shakyamuni said:

The number of hell beings is equal to specks of dust of this universe; the number of hungry ghosts is as many as the dust particles of the river Ganges; and the number of animals is, though small compared to hells and hungry ghosts, still as numerous as the heap of residual barley grains thrown after brewing chang, Tibetan beer. The demigods are like the billowing of clouds and storms in the sky; and the number of gods and human beings is as small as the number of dust particles on the nail of Buddha's thumb.

Let us now study this according to our convention. The number of hells and hungry ghosts is beyond our imagination, and this is something we cannot see with our eyes nor are we able to produce scientific facts. However, let us just take the example of animals alone. There are two categories of animals, those living in the oceans and those scattered throughout the world. Within the latter, take the example of ants alone. The number of ants found in a single ant hill is even more than the total population of India. Isn't it? Imagine how many ant-hills there will be throughout the world. When you use more of such examples you will find that this precious human rebirth
is actually very rare.

To give another example from my experience of working as the General Secretary of the Council for Cultural and Religious Affairs: out of the total Tibetan population who escaped into India and sought asylum, the number of Sangha members - monks, nuns and tantrikas (Ngag-pa) of all the five spiritual traditions of Tibet in early 1980's - was barely six thousand. Of these, eight hundred are tantric practitioners and lay persons like myself, and three hundred are nuns. Now, it can be safely said that out of this, a very small number of persons sincerely practice and devote their life to dharma. It is true though that Buddha has said:

A person of my type can judge other persons, but not otherwise. Should others try to do so, it will be detrimental to oneself.

Truly speaking, it is very difficult for us to judge who are and who are not ordinary persons; however, by making a rough estimation using our human judgement, among six thousand sangha members, would it not be difficult to find a hundred who are pure dharma practitioners? And even rarer would be those who have renounced this world, and still amongst these, it would be more difficult to find, if my concept is not tainted by wrong views, just a few monks who live like Milarepa among the common sangha population. So how many human beings are actually using their precious human rebirth these days for pure spiritual practices? We all know ourself the best.

Significance of precious human rebirth

Why is this precious human rebirth considered so significant or important? Because, if we fully utilise this rebirth, we can fulfil both the temporary and ultimate purposes. It is upon this rebirth that a person can acquire wealth and fame, and fulfil all mundane goals. Ultimately speaking, the state of peace beyond suffering and the omniscience of a Buddha can only be found upon this rebirth. Because we have a fully characterised human rebirth, we have all access to dharma, teachers, teachings and experiences to grow with. I have already explained why other beings do not have proper
Having obtained this precious human rebirth characterised by eighteen features, it is worth trying to extract the essence out of it, otherwise, we would be like a person who goes to the jewel island to collect jewels but returns empty-handed. If we try by all means to extract essence out of this precious human rebirth, even the attainment of the state of a Buddha is not impossible within this short life time.

If anybody wishes to become a yogi as great as Milarepa, it is through the vehicle of this human rebirth that a person can do so. We need not seek prophecies, divinations or otherwise. One's determination, will-power and effort will show the directions. As the great Shantideva admonishes us:

Relying upon the boat of human body;
Free yourself from the great river of pain!
As it is hard to find this boat again.
This is no time for sleep, you fool.

We are fooling ourselves if we do not use the maximum benefit out of this rebirth for our spiritual growth. The great Shantideva compares this precious human rebirth to a boat to cross to the other shore of the river of suffering and the journey itself as a spiritual advancement. Since this boat of human rebirth may not be found again, if a person is sincerely willing to cross the river of suffering, he must make efforts, or he will have to repent the loss of this rebirth, meaning that it is very rare to find such a precious human rebirth again in the future. Therefore, he admonishes us, "Oh you ignoramus, don't sleep, wake up and be clever."

There are two purposes of obtaining this precious human rebirth: a) to acquire temporary benefits and happiness and, b) to achieve the ultimate goals of liberation and omniscience. Temporarily speaking, without a healthy, precious human body, how can we even obtain our basic necessities—food, clothes and dwellings? Benefitting self and others and providing happiness and pleasure to all, even in a non-religious sense, must come only through this rebirth. Ultimately speaking, it is only through the proper use of this precious human
rebirth that one can follow the spiritual paths and grounds under the
guidance of a qualified master and reach the state of liberation and
omniscience. It is, therefore, important to think, "Having found this
precious human rebirth, I shall try by all means to take the essence
out of it", and act in a wise way.

Taking myself as an example. I am an old man going to be sixty,
and to be quite frank, if I had done a pure Dharma practice until
now, the attainment of the State of Unity (uganada) would not be so
difficult. Unfortunately, I have wasted my precious time, and, as you
see me now, I am an old father. If all of you, who are certainly
younger than myself, do not act now, a similar situation may arise.
Let us apply the teachings to ourselves. I may or may not have
qualities to be a teacher myself, but to those of you facing me, I still
insist and say, "Think properly, look back and review what important
things you have done in your life; having attained this precious human
rebirth, reflect on your own situation." In doing so, probably most of
us will find discontentment with our lives until today. Truly speaking,
this is the predicament of all of us who have gathered here, including
myself. After reflecting upon this precious human rebirth it is very
likely that we may realise the rarity of finding this fully endowed
human rebirth even more strongly then ever before, and take some
positive steps in our hearts to make this life more meaningful. It is
very important to generate such an interest once you have received
this teaching on the rarity of your precious human rebirth. With this,
let us presume, we have finished discussing the topic of contemplating
the rarity of finding this precious human rebirth.

Contemplating the death and impermanence of human rebirth

Next, we shall talk about meditation on impermanence of this
precious human rebirth. All of us know for sure that once we are
born as human beings, it is natural that we must die. We have to die,
and nobody is capable of escaping death, but at the same time, it is
also true to our experience that, from one corner of our heart, each
of us has a very strong pride, confidence and hope that we will not
die today, tomorrow, next year, and not before a couple of years to
come. Our wish is to live longer, even though sometimes we may wish to die for emotional reasons which is crazy. And in fact some even manage to do so. These things are very unfortunate. We have this clinging in our hearts that we will not die.

If we sincerely love ourselves and feel pity for ourselves, then we must not ruin ourselves, but we must turn our mind towards the practice of dharma and be mindful of death and impermanence.

The purpose of this thought is to keep oneself positively conscious of one's activities, and this means that spiritual advancement naturally comes along, because we will be using our mindfulness and alertness in watching our thoughts and activities. This results in generating a sense of guilt about our engagement in negative activities, and this may allow us to know ourselves better, thus giving rise to opportunities to mend ourselves for better prospects. Traditionally speaking, this awareness keeps us abreast with the spiritual practice.

Now, to begin with, the actual discourse of meditation on impermanence and death has three parts, contemplating that:

1. Death is certain
2. The time of death is uncertain, and
3. At death only the practice of dharma is of benefit

*Death is certain*

We must know that, once we have found this rebirth, it will be snatched away by the lord of death sooner or later, unless it is an immutable vajra body, in which case the story would be completely different. All sentient beings who live under this sky are bound to die. Take the example of all those great masters in the past. In India, where Buddhism had flourished in the past and Buddha Shakyamuni had taught extensively, finally, he also manifested death, and is no longer with us today. Similarly, his seven patriarchs, the six Indian pandits and the two supreme masters, and the eighty Mahasiddhas of India have all appeared and passed away. Today, we only learn about them from their biographies, and in many cases, not even their life stories can be found with certainty. Similarly, if we reflect upon
the great masters of Tibet, those who were responsible for the introduction, dissemination and preservation of Buddhism, mainly, Acharya Padmasambhava, King Trisong Deutsan and Shantarakshita and others, have all passed away. Among the Tibetan Buddhist traditions those responsible for spreading Nyingma tradition were hundreds of treasure masters, principal among them being Nyadag Nyangral Nyima Odzer and Guru Chowang, the two most prominent treasure masters and others; of the Sakya tradition, there were the five foremost masters, of the Kagyu, Marpa, Milarepa and Gampopa and of the Gelug tradition, Je-Tsong Khapa and his disciples, all of whom have passed away; none of them has survived to this day. Similarly, lately the passing away of Gyalwa Karmapa, Ling Rinpoche, Trijang Rinpoche and Dudjom Rinpoche, all of whom were supreme spiritual masters of Tibet, is a great loss for us. All these acts of death should mean much to our personal spiritual awareness. We still do not take seriously what their passing away actually meant. We have missed them all, and what remains now is their records of great deeds. If we were to ask, "Let us have one of them come back among us today," this is impossible, isn't it? Using past examples we must contemplate death as imminent. And, if we contemplate on those who are among us today, none of these high lamas will remain forever. Even the future generation will not survive death. Despite all the incredible scientific facilities that are made available to us now which were unknown in the past, we will not be able to save humanity from dying. Instead, if we think rationally, probably all this scientific advancement speeds up the pace of our death rather than prolonging it. Hence, in confirming ourselves of this fact that death is certain, we do not require anybody's prophecies or advice. There are numerous examples. I would like to cite only one stanza from Ashvaghosha's work which says:

Have you ever seen, or heard about or even doubted that someone on this earth or above had survived death, and after death? Wherever you go, nowhere can be found a place, where death is insusceptible, Neither in the space nor deep in the ocean;
Or even if you hide in the hearts of mountains.

Truly speaking, are we able to give me an example of even one single person within the three levels of existence, i.e., above, below and in-between, who has survived death? Have you heard or seen a person who has lived since beginningless time?

Let us take our own lives as an example. From our birth from mothers' wombs up to the age of five or six, we are innocent. Then during our schooling until about twenty we strive hard at school, worry about our examinations, etc., and in this way, we pass our time and give ourselves no opportunity to practice the dharma. When we grow to become young fellows, we remain absorbed in mundane affairs, in romantic life, falling in love with one another, and again, leaving no time for practice. After when we grow to be responsible men and women, we are engrossed in seeking our livelihood more strongly than ever before trying to establish ourselves. Gradually, when we become old, our body and sense become weaker, and though our spirit may be strong, because of our physical instability and weakness, even if we practice dharma, it is less productive and may appear superficial.

Take another example, the twenty-four hours of each day. We spend half of each day in bed sleeping, snoring and dreaming, and, in this way, if we have lived twenty years of our life, we have spent ten years in bed just sleeping. Let us presume this as being normal; however, if we reflect on the other side of the ten years, we know that we spent many years in the pursuit of mundane affairs - eating, sleeping, wandering about, gossiping, doing business, cherishing self, hating others and so forth. How much time did we waste of our lives? Our life passes like a dream. Therefore, realising this, we must pledge that we will not waste our time anymore but try to extract the essence and engage in the practice of the dharma. For those who wish to practice deeper level of meditation on death, I would suggest that you should try meditation on the process of death and dying from qualified masters. Some of you might find this particularly helpful to activate awareness of death in yourself.
The time of death is uncertain

If we were Buddhas we would know the year, month, day, and even hour and minute of our death, because Buddhas have freedom to manifest their death whenever they choose. Their wisdom is omniscient. Since we are not Buddhas, we do not know the time of our death as much as we know the time of our meal. Hence, we are ignorant of the time of our death. Generally speaking, this is true of all sentient beings, and in particular, this is true for us human beings who live on this planet. Although not by analysis, i.e., by scientific examinations but based on facts from the teachings of the Buddha, which were passed from teacher to disciples since the time of Buddha until now, we can actually reflect on the uncertainty of death of human beings in two ways: through contemplating the extreme of the long period and the extreme of short period. The extremes of the long and short periods refer to the two extreme lifespans of the human beings of this world.

It is said that during the fortunate aeons, the lifespan of human beings was immeasurable, and that they enjoyed an extremely long period of subsistence; this is the extreme of the long period. And it is taught and believed that the lifespan of human beings would decrease down to an extreme of a maximum of ten years of subsistence, which is yet to come. This is the extreme of the short period. This period of human existence will appear as soon as the lifespan of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings ceases and is expected to last until the appearance of the next Buddha, Maitreya, and the life of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings has already crossed more than 2500 years out of its maximum lifespan which is supposed to be 5000 years. The present life expectancy of human beings of this world is sixty to seventy years.

Taking myself as an example. I am going to be sixty and let's presume that I shall live up to seventy years, I feel that until now I have not contributed anything valuable neither to my spiritual progression nor to the preservation of the teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni or for the benefit of sentient beings. Given that I am going to live up to seventy, there are only ten years left. Out of this, half of the time will be spent sleeping, and what can I expect to do
with the rest, which is only five years? When I reflect like this, I feel it is very difficult to do anything worth while. Still, if I were to make an effort, I would not say that even the attainment of the State of Unity of Buddhahood is not impossible. It is just possible, because it all depends upon the forces an individual has. Yet another angle of contemplating the uncertainty of death is to meditate on the impermanent aspect of this rebirth. To quote the teaching of the great master, Longchen Rabjampa:

Our life is like that of a clay-pot.

Take human beings as an example. If it is asked which of the two, tomorrow or the future will come first? We cannot answer this with any assurance, because it is very likely that, of these two, so-called next life may come before tomorrow. The border between these two is very subtle and sudden. Each and every single fraction of impermanence keeps this body moving, and once a fraction of it loses its spirit, this may well mean the end of our life. In this way, if we were to contemplate the impermanence of our life, we would understand the uncertainty of the time of death. I recollect some masters who remarked, just as there are different degrees of the strength of mind, there are different degrees of strength of living things that lack mind, and even their state of existence is precarious. Why can't we apply the same conditional analysis to confirm ourselves of the uncertainty of death?

Question: Why is our life like a clay-pot?

Answer: I was going to illustrate that in my subsequent talk. I meant that just as a clay-pot breaks very easily, since it is made of earth, in the same way, our life is so fragile that, with the meeting of the slightest of conditions, it can easily end in death. Take for example this flower on my desk in front of from me. Normally, to check whether or not its life-force is strong, we may fiddle or play with it. If it wilts easily simply by being touched, then we can say that the life of this flower is definitely short, but if it is not affected by being touched or played with and remains strong, then we can say that its
life-force is strong and that it will live long. In the same manner, if a person's life-force is strong and stable, his life will be long, and not otherwise. We can apply this example to all human beings. If both the life and life-force of something is strong, we can say that such a phenomenon has great energy. If a flower does not wilt by being played with, and still shows lustre and life, it means that it is strong. If one’s life-force is strong and one’s life is long, we can say such a human being has strong energy, he is a strong person. If we take the example of any part of our body, from a single hair of our head to the nails of our feet, and examine them to find out which constitute this human rebirth, we will find that they are all ephemeral. They are as ephemeral as bubbles of water which burst out instantly.

Life is also likened to the colours of autumn; they appear quickly and fade quickly. In the same way, if we examine our mind, we ordinary beings who have not gained control of our mind will find that our mind is not static; it does not remain static as it was yesterday, or is today. Our thought process changes quickly. Our mind is fickle. As the great Nagarjuna has said:

When the earth, Meru, the oceans, and the seven suns, are to be consumed by the blazing flame leaving no even dust. What need is there to speak of such a frail thing as the human body?

Likewise, the causes and conditions for death are many, and the causes and conditions for our survival are comparatively few, because of many factors that shorten or weaken our life-force. Our spiritual energy is weakened by conditions and causes of death. The causes and conditions which we presume to be favourable for our survival may even cause death. We are, therefore, admonished to turn our minds towards the gathering of spiritual energy. If this question is raised, "What are the many causes and conditions for our death?" The answer would be, we are harmed by other human beings, animals, spirits and demons. Take the example of kinds of harm human beings inflict upon each other. We imprison, murder, fight and assault one another. Wild animals like lions, tigers, snakes, bears etc., can attack us, leading to death. Accidents of any type, natural catastrophe like inundating rain, wind, flood and fire can cause
untimely death. Buddh has said in a sutra:

Sickness destroys healthy body,
Old age destroys youth,
Degeneration destroys excellence,
Death destroys life;
However, these cannot be easily avoided
Through a quick escape, deception by wealth, material, mantra and medicine.

There was a yogi who came to Tibet from the south India known by the name Dampa Sangye, a contemporary of the great Milarepa. He came to Dingri district in western Tibet. Because the people of Dingri had a special spiritual connection with him, they became his patrons, and he stayed there, giving them teachings. While he was there he composed a text called *A Hundred Precepts for the People of Dingri* in which he says:

Do not be deceived by distractions in which you indulge because you do not know when you are going to die, for death is imminent and we are not aware of the time of death.

Therefore, do not be distracted by merely seeking food and clothes and mundane happiness, but know that you are definitely going to die and that one day the noose of the lord of death will bind you to death. Hence, right from now generate a strong sense of involvement in spiritual practices more seriously then in mundane affairs.

*At death only dharma is of benefit*

If we question ourself, “What is dharma?” for some, the answer is to recite mantras, say prayers, make circumambulations, make offerings to the sangha or even construct monasteries, etc. Are all these dharma practices? No doubt at times these may become dharma practices. But most of the time these do not become dharma practices, because we associate them with worldly interest, and hence the spiritual significance of these become valueless. Actually speaking,
these may be considered as limbs of dharma practices, but what actually constitute a dharma practice is the improvement of one's behaviours of body, speech and mind, their betterment. Bringing about a transformation of these from negative into positive or from unwholesome into wholesome deeds is a dharma practice. It requires an amendment or transformation of our mind. Now, how do we substantiate the fact that it is only dharma at death that is of benefit at death?

Take the example of a very rich person who possesses a huge amount of gold, silver and other precious things stored in a place as big as this Library. He will not be able to take even a tola of gold with him when he leaves this world. Nobody will be able to give an example of a person who has taken a tola of gold with him at death. Of what benefit is his wealth at death? Above all, wealthy people actually have more problems than the ordinary folk. Their peace is at stake. Most of these people certainly have less happiness than common people. The best type of life would be to have just enough possessions for basic necessities - food, clothing and dwelling. If one remain content with these basic necessities at a moderate level, I guarantee that such a person will be happier than the rich people. This is the best way of living to carry out dharma practices.

We do not hear that even one wealthy person on this earth or any person of great reputation and fame ever took with him his servants and retinue at death. Do we? None of those high lamas who passed away recently like Gyalwa Karmapa, Dudjom Rinpoche, Ling Rinpoche and Trijang Rinpoche, all of whom had thousands of disciples, could take a single monk with them when they passed away. They were all very special persons, and what made them special were their spiritual qualities; even then they could not take a single person with them at death. Neither did Mao Tsetung, famous for his brutality and power, take even a single soldier with him at death. Similarly, if we think of ourselves, when we were born we did not bring anything with us. We were all born empty-handed, though with some spirit of life and mental tendencies, and we must die in a similar manner. If we ever carry anything with us, it is our karmic strength stored within our mental continuum. There is nobody on this earth who can clear away all your karmic potentials. Let me cite His
Holiness the Dalai Lama. During a discourse, He mentioned:

When we were born we were impelled to take this rebirth by misfortunes, and if we had to die in the same manner, isn't it extremely unfortunate?

Do you still wonder what will then accompany us like a friend at death? To be more clear, it is only the virtuous and non-virtuous latencies we have accumulated over this and many past lives. These forces will follow us like the shadow of our own body. Buddha himself had said in the sutra called *Advice to a King*:

O great king!
When it is time for the king to die,
His resources, friends and teachers shall
Not follow him
But wherever shall a person migrates
His karma will follow him like
The shadow of his own.

Just as a person caught in fire would jump and look out for all means to extinguish the fire, similarly, if we believe that rebirth is imminent, then it is important that we have a strong urge to make the next rebirth meaningful by all means, for the time is running out, and we are wasting it only for insignificant things. This must come out of realizing death and impermanence of this life.

We must, therefore, make efforts to accumulate the causes to free ourselves from taking a bad rebirth, and extinguish negative karmas. Normally we just do not push ourselves hard enough to carry out dharma practices even though we find an opportunity occasionally. Consider, for instance, Tibetans who sell sweaters during three months of a year. At the beginning of each business season they rush into business ventures, but after the season is over, do they give time to carry out dharma practices? No, they don't. Similarly, those soldiers in battle with the enemy are in a very great hurry, but do they find time to carry out dharma practices after their battle is over? No, they don't. Similarly, do the farmers, when they have completed
their harvest seasons, find time to carry out practices? Using these examples, the great Phadampa Sangye remarked:

O the people of Dingri!
As soon as you recollect
That you have not turned to spiritual practice
Even after having completed your busy periods
Then you must rush to do so.

Therefore, it is important to be mindful of a strong interest in doing dharma practices whenever you find an opportunity. Only a few are in a position to carry out dharma practices at all times. It is important to have an undiminished wish. It is, therefore, very important to hold this intention. With this, I shall conclude the section on death and impermanence.

Up to now, we have finished discussing the two main points, i.e. contemplating the rarity of finding a precious human rebirth characterised by eight leisure and ten freedoms, and the contemplation of death and impermanence of such a rebirth. We will realise that it is not enough to have found such a precious human rebirth, for every moment it takes us closer to death. Since our birth, we have been moving day by day towards the completion of our allotted lifespan. Each day, from getting up in the morning untill the next morning, each and every moment, shortens our lifespan, thus taking us closer to death. We will certainly realise that having just found this precious human rebirth is not enough, for there is no way to supplement our lifespan, to increase it, but it diminishes day by day.

Contemplating the drawbacks of cyclic existence

If our death were like the drying up of a pond, or the extinguishing of a fire, this would be a different matter. After death, we must take innumerable rebirths in cyclic existence through the force of karma. Therefore, mere death is not the end of all; on the other hand, it may well mean the beginning of yet another cycle of suffering. We must take rebirth because of the force of our deluded actions, and if it is
difficult to abandon even the most gross level of delusions, let alone the subtle levels. Once having been reborn in this round of existence, is there a possibility to finding happiness and joy? It is extremely difficult. Just as Guru Rinpoche has said: There is no happiness, and joys on the tip of the needle of cyclic existence (‘khor-wa khab-kyi rtzc-mo-la/ bdc-ba nam-yang yod-ma-yin), it is really true.

In order to understand the nature of sufferings within cyclic existence, we must contemplate the sufferings of various types of beings within cyclic existence. What are the factors that determine our birth of any type within cyclic existence? It is the positive karmas, i.e. virtues, and the negative karmas, i.e. non-virtues. It is these two factors that decide one's future rebirth in cyclic existence. We have no right, no freedom, to choose. Simply wishing to take rebirth in a higher realm as a god or human being, or even wishing to take rebirth in the bad realm as a hell, or animal, one cannot fulfil one's goals. You should have already earned karma to be reborn wherever you wish to be reborn. Our karma is our best judge. To come to the main topic, i.e. the contemplation of the sufferings of cyclic existence, this has three sub-divisions:

1) contemplating the suffering of the three lower realms
2) contemplating the sufferings of the higher realms, and
3) contemplating the three types of sufferings in general

The sufferings of the three lower realms

Taking rebirth as beings in the three lower realms is very unfortunate. Within these, to be born in hell is most unfortunate. Do we not usually think, "I have not committed any serious non-virtues; therefore, I have accumulated no cause to be reborn in any of the three bad realms?" But when we think of the causes that are responsible for rebirth in the hell realm, these are hatred and anger at their strongest level. Think of each single day of our life. Actually speaking, there is hardly any day in which we did not have an experience of anger or hatred. We are so receptive of the negativities. For example, to think of the smallest, when bitten by a mosquitoes or a bee, we generate anger, which seems rather silly. It is said that the strongest
hatred results in rebirth as a hell being, the middling as hungry ghost, and the smallest as animal. When we reflect on each day of our life, we will realise that we have definitely generated many instances of hatred and anger. From beginningless time until today, we have taken innumerable rebirths and in the course of these lives, we can be assured that we have committed many negativities that will result in rebirth as any of the three types of unfortunate beings, particularly a hell being. In this lifetime alone, since our birth until today we have committed negativities beyond imagination. Having already committed such negativities, there is no other way but to experience the ripening of the karmas upon this or future rebirths, unless we purify these through proper application of the antidotes. Your karmas will ripen upon yourself, since there is no way to do away with them by dividing them among friends, or through using deceptive means.

In general, the sufferings of the hells, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, gods and demi-gods are all creation of one's mind. As *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva says:

> Who intentionally created
> All the weapons for those in hell?
> Who created the burning iron ground?
> From where did all the women (in hell) ensue?

When it is explained that these are said to be mere creations of one's mind, he meant that these are reflections of the mind outside of it, although the experience of suffering is still within. If we understand this, we will understand the ultimate nature of all existence, the status of macro and micro phenomena.

According to Nyingma teachings, the extent of rebirths a person may take, in general, is of three modes: a) the extreme of the higher b) the extreme of the lower, and c) the intermediate rebirth. The extreme of the higher refers to the mode of rebirth of a highly advanced person who, due to his past virtuous investments, follows the paths combining method and wisdom under the guidance of a qualified master and attains control over rebirths like that of great Milarepa. For such practitioners, it is possible to reach the state of enlightenment in one life-time, without having to pass through the
intermediate (bardo) state of rebirth. Rebirth of the extreme of the lower is that of a person, who, after death, without even going through the intermediate state of rebirth, immediately takes rebirth in hell without respite because he may have committed any or all the five heinous crimes, which are: patricide, matricide, drawing blood from a Tathagatha (Buddha), causing schism among the Sangha community, and holding extreme wrong views. These are the five heinous, non-virtuous actions.

Presuming that we have neither committed any of the five heinous crimes, nor have collected causes for an excellent rebirth, and therefore, we face a normal death, even then, we must go through the bardo state before taking our next rebirth. What is this bardo or intermediate state of rebirth? What experiences does a being encounter in the bardo state? I would say that our experience of bardo is similar to what we would experience in a dream state. Just as our dream state is mental and not physical, similarly, our experience of bardo is like that of a dream state in deep sleep. While in deep sleep, our consciousnesses and senses subside; in other words, they cease to manifest, or are absorbed in the basic consciousness. However, we as persons do not cease to exist and still undergo different experiences. Similarly, during bardo state we as persons do not cease to exist. In our state of dream we experience different types of emotions, crying, struggling, suffering, murdering, and sometimes we are extremely terrified. All these are basically reflections of our day light activities, mental or physical. Similarly, a bardo being experiences his immediate past life. It is for this reason that we Tibetans set aside offering of every meal for forty-nine days after the death of a member of the family. Though he is dead as being a member of the family, his person continues as a bardo being. And, bardo beings live on smells and tastes. Generally speaking, dreams are but an illusion, and there is no truth in them. As a saying in the Nyingma tradition of teaching goes, "decide everything with your views, cross the mountain of your goals through your activities, at least examine them with your dreams." Sometimes, examination of dreams can be meaningful. Because our experiences in a dream state are strongly associated with the "I" and, I feel, the experience of that particular "I" is very similar to the "I" of the bardo state. Through
examination of the mode of grasping at the "I" of the dream state we can, to a certain extent, decipher what the state of bardo would be like. e.g., how it is mental and not physical.

Now, if you wonder, suppose a person were to take rebirth as a hot hell being, what would be his experience in the bardo state? In his bardo state he will generate the feeling of being tortured by extremely cold wind, cold showers of rain pouring on him, and will crave for warmth and a hot environment. These signs take that bardo being into the hot hell realm. Such experiences are somewhat similar to craving for warm clothing and wishing to be near a fire place when we are troubled by extreme cold weather. A bardo being who is going to be reborn as a hot hell being also experiences similar sensations. Hence, it is a natural phenomenon. If a person in the bardo state is going to take rebirth as a cold hell being, then he will long for hot environment, because he will be experiencing immense cold. As such, as soon as the lifespan of that bardo being is exhausted, in his next rebirth he will be born as a cold hell being. As such, it is said that the emotions of a bardo being are very sensitive, the slightest of happiness invokes a deep sense of joy, and, the slightest of suffering brings immense pain. A bardo being is also very impatient. His mood changes very quickly. Such is his mental disposition. What are the physical qualities of a bardo being? His body is extremely delicate, sensitive and susceptible to sores and reactions. The person's experiences of life in the bardo state will be similar to those in his immediate past life: e.g., people like us will only have the appearances or illusions of how we spent our daily lives eating, walking, sitting and sleeping - the four types of activities. Such activities will rule a bardo being's appearances. When it comes to the last moment before taking rebirth, he will experience emotions corresponding to the form of rebirth he is going to take.

It is needless to argue if this state of bardo exists or not. All of you believe in the existence of ghosts, and these are nomally intermediate beings in Buddhist concept. The life span of a bardo has been explained in different ways. Some say a bardo being's life lasts up to a maximum of 49 days, and some say it lasts only a seek. Both hold the truth, because there is no uniformity in the lifespan of bardo beings just as there is no universal limit on the life span of human
beings. Similarly, their lifespan can be of any extent between a single day to forty-nine days. This depends entirely on the force of an individual's karma.

While practicing meditation, think, "I have committed many non-virtues that will result in rebirth in the three bad realms, in which, when born, the sufferings will be inconceivable. How I wish I could free myself and others from experiencing such sufferings." In order that our meditation is effective, we must contemplate the sufferings of various beings.

According to the order of the text this has four contemplations:

1) contemplation of the sufferings of the hot hells
2) contemplation of the sufferings of the cold hells
3) contemplation of the sufferings of the neighbouring hells,
4) contemplation of the sufferings of the occasional hells.

The sufferings of the hot hells

Environment

The environment of hot hells is such that the grounds and mountains are made of red-hot iron plates, rivers and ravines are made of molten iron, and the earth of red-hot copper sends blazing flames to the height of one cubit (about 18 inches). Boiling molten copper and iron torture the body of hell beings to the extent of disintegrating their flesh and bones. The intensity of the heat in hot hell is explained by an analogy. The intensity of heat of the fire produced from burning seven logs of sandalwood together is equal to the intensity of heat produced by one spark of fire at the end of this aeon; and seven times the intensity of heat of that fire is equal to the intensity of fire in the reviving hell state; and this intensity doubles in each subsequent hell realm.

Nature of suffering

What are the eight hot hells? These are enumerated in the order of
the least hot to the hottest hell, as against the normal order starting from the most severe to the least severe hell.

Accordingly, the first of the eight hot hells is the reviving hell. The environment of these hells are the same as explained before. The only difference is that the intensity of the heat in the reviving hell state is seven times stronger than the fire at the end of the aeon. In the reviving hell, beings are called to assemble, seemingly without any reason, but in reality through the force of their karma. They generate strong hatred and anger against one another; they fight among themselves and kill one another by chopping off their heads, hands etc. According to the text, the weapons held by these beings are swords, spears, arrows etc., but I can say for sure that the present day reviving hells possess modern nuclear weapons in addition to swords and arrows etc. This is because the karmic experiences we encounter on this earth affects the karmic experiences and suffering of the hell beings. These two are interrelated. These hell beings pass their daily life by killing one another with their weapons, and then suddenly hear a voice from the sky saying, "revive," so they revive and experience the same suffering again. In this way, they experience a cycle of the same suffering several times a day through the force of their karma, and remain in the reviving hell until their karma to live there is exhausted.

Next is the black line hell. The guardians of the hell draw lines on the bodies of the hell being with red-hot iron wires, then cut them into pieces with saws just as a carpenter would cut a plank of wood. Even after all these tortures, they revive, only to undergo the same suffering again and again. This is the kind of suffering these beings experience in the black-line hell realm, where they endure such suffering until the karma that forced them to take birth there is exhausted.

Next is the crushing hell. The environment is similar to that of the previous hell, but here the hell guardians are equal in number to that of the hell beings. As explained earlier, the mountains and ravines are as though made of red-hot iron, but here these appear in the form of the heads of different animals such as snakes, crocodiles, lions etc. As the hell beings roam about in the mountains, all of a sudden, due to the force of their karma, the mountains move forward, shut down and
crush the hell beings in between them. Blood shoots out of their eyes, ears, nose, mouth, anus and from everywhere. Then they again revive, only to experience the same type of suffering over and over again until their karma is exhausted. Some are crushed in a mortar by a pestle as big as mount Meru. They are smashed flat, then again revive, and this cycle repeats itself until their karma is exhausted.

Next is the howling or crying hell. Here, the hell beings are terribly scared by the hell guardians, who threaten and inflict injuries on them. Hence the hell beings escape in panic, looking for safe places. Eventually, they find shelter in iron cages; as soon as they enter these houses, the doors and windows automatically close down and the houses catch fire. Because of this, the hell beings cry, mourn, and scream for help in that blazing iron cage. They are, therefore, known as the howling hells.

Next is the loudly howling hell. Here, the environment is similar to that of the howling hells, but the iron cages have double walls. Threatened by the hell guardians, when the hell beings run away to find safer places, they find themselves shut in the iron cages from where, even if they manage to escape, they encounter yet another frame of burning iron cages from which they cannot escape. Then they cry for help very loudly. Though their suffering is similar to that of the beings in the howling hell realm, because the iron cages have double walls, they scream and cry even louder than in the previous hells for protection and help; that is why this hell is called the loudly howling hell.

Next is the hell called the hot hell. Concerning the environment of this hell realm, it seems, generally speaking, that the environment is the same, apart from the fact that in each subsequent hell realm the fire become more intense. The hot hell realm is said to be located countless yojanas (paktse) below the earth. The beings there are immersed and cooked alive in huge cauldrons, like the cooking of fish. Their flesh and bones disintegrate and float on the surface of the boiling water. At times, burning spears are stuck through their anus up to the crown of their heads, thus consuming all their internal organs. Sometimes, they are also beaten alive with iron clubs, crushed and smashed to pulp.

Next is the extremely hot hells. Besides being cooked alive in the
huge cauldrons, at times their bodies are pierced with three-pronged burning spears, the middle prong of which goes through the anus up to the crown while the other two are thrashed through the soles of the feet and come out of the shoulders, thus burning all the internal and external parts of their bodies. Blazing fire comes out of all pores of their bodies. At another time, they are burnt alive on the hot iron ground, making them indistinguishable from the blazing fire and sparks. Sometimes, molten copper and iron are poured through the crown of their heads, melting their flesh and even bones. Such is the nature of suffering of the extremely hot hell.

The last of the eight hot hells is the hell without respite, the most serious one. This hot hell realm is the hottest, and the nature of suffering of hells most intense. The hell beings are tortured in an environment where fire blazes from all directions. Through the force of their karma, they assemble on the burning iron ground, and all of a sudden, fire shoot out of the forest and mountains, consuming their bodies that become indistinguishable from it. The flames are so thick that the beings can only hear the cries of their fellow hell beings in despair and agony from a distance. In this way they suffer for innumerable lives until their karma is exhausted. The nature of their suffering is such that they do not die with one torture but experience death in a gradual manner. First their skin is scorched; then their flesh, including veins, is consumed; then the bones and marrow melt down; and, in the end, nothing more than a black stubble like the charred wick of a lamp is left. Still instead of dying, they revive, and the process of burning starts again until their karma to remain there is exhausted and become indistinguishable from the burning iron filings.

In due course, as the force of their karma decreases and the intensity of their suffering become less stronger, they encounter an environment of blazing iron mountains. As they escape here and there, they are caught in fire, which consumes them alive from head to toe. At times, they find their tongue extended on the burning iron grounds and burnt. Sometimes, molten iron is poured into their mouth, thus burning all their inner organs etc. In this way they endure innumerable sufferings, extremely intense beyond our imagination. This is thus a general presentation of the hot hells, their
environment and the nature of their suffering. However, in reality, the suffering of hell beings, their location and environment cannot be described precisely. The description of hells, the hot hells, here is only a fraction of what may be explained. Since karma is inconceivable and so is the nature of the hells, it is beyond our imagination.

Question: It seems that the non-virtues are settled in hell. Why do we bring the karma to ripen in our lives if there are all these sufferings in hell. Why, when we are born, do we still have karma to ripen?

Answer: Because, karma is infinite, it is not necessary that all non-virtues and their results must ripen in hell. The results of those karmas which do not worth hell, therefore, ripen on others realms, of which this human realm is one. I mean, just as there are different degrees of intensity of karmas, there are different levels of results. Therefore, it is not necessary to experience all evil consequences in the hell realms only. It is just our sense of superiority and desire that we want this plane to be the nicest and most pleasant and this is ridiculous unless it is for special spiritual reasons. Actually speaking, we undergo sufferings similar to that of the hells in this human rebirth, but we are not aware of it. The most serious consequences of our delusions, especially of anger and hatred, results in rebirth as hells. Certainly, if we compare our sufferings with that of hell beings, we will find that our sufferings on this plain are trivial and insignificant. Still we cannot bear them. This proves our weakness. Therefore, if we endure sufferings on this human rebirth bravely, which means, if we accept these patiently, it seems that the results of karma are also relatively minimised.

Life span

Concerning the lifespan of these hot hells, fifty human years is equal to a single day of the gods of the Four Great Kings, the lowest of six types of gods within the desire realm. According to the Tibetan calendar, thirty days make a month, and twelve months a year, though sometimes thirteen or eleven months only. In any case fifty human years is equivalent to just one day of the gods of the Four
Great Kings of the desire realm, and five hundred years of these Four Great Kings is equal to just one day in the life of a reviving hell. In this way, in each subsequent hell realm, it is said that the number of years increases by fifty times. Based on this the lifespan of the most serious hell, i.e., the hell without respite will be infinite. It may come to innumerable aeons.

*The sufferings of the cold hells*

There are eight cold hells, starting from the blistering hell to the cold hell with multiple cracks like a lotus. Each subsequent hell realm is explained as being seven times cooler than the previous ones. Those in the intermediate state that are to be reborn as cold hell being experience intense heat, and crave for cool environment, just as we would crave for a cool place when we encounter intense heat. The bardo beings who are going to take rebirth as cold hells beings experience a similar situation. The topic on cold hells can also be discussed under three headings: 1) environment 2) nature of sufferings, and 3) lifespan.

*Environment*

Due to the force of collective karma of the cold hells, their environment is such that they never see the sun, the moon or any kind of light or clarity. They live in total darkness of night all the time. Rains, cold winds, cold showers and hail fall all the time, and the paths and places remain fully covered. It is difficult to find a piece of earth without ice and snow. Hence, the place is extremely cold.

*Nature of suffering*

The first of the eight cold hells is the goose-pimple like cold hell or the blistering cold hell. Beings here experience extreme cold from freezing winds in an environment where it is always snowing. Cold waves of snow flakes pour down strongly and they shiver all the time. Due to this, goose pimples appear on their bodies. It is for this reason these hells are known as the goose pimple like cold.
Next is the bursting blisters hell. The cold here is seven times stronger than in the previous hell realm. The environment is extremely cold; the blisters from cold burst out and turn into sores that infect and fester. The beings experience great pain. Pus pours out from all the broken blisters. Such is the suffering of the beings in the bursting blisters hell.

The third cold hell is the atchu-crying hell. The hell beings here shout atchu, again and again, due to extreme cold stronger than in the previous hell realm. The blisters burst open, water and pus come out of them, and they are infested with worms with iron beaks which eat their flesh. The cold is so strong and the beings so weak that they can only mutter atchu, again and again. For these reasons this hell is called the atchu-crying hell.

The fourth is the Kyiu-crying hell. In this hell the cold is so strong that the beings cannot even utter the word atchu from their painful mouths, but underneath they are just able to produce a gasp of sound, Kyiu, because of which this hell is called the Kyiu-crying hell.

The fifth cold hell is the chattering teeth hell. The surrounding is extremely cold, so that the beings are not able to utter even atchu or kyiu. Their mouths are tightly closed, and their teeth just chatter with cold, and therefore this hell is called the chattering teeth hells.

Next is the hell with cracks like that of the utpala flower. In this hell realm, freezing cold winds blow, and their bodies turn blue like utpala flowers. Their bodies crack, like that of the utpala flower, in five to six parts.

Next is the hell with cracks like that of the lotus flowers. In the previous hell, the body become blue due to intense cold, but here not only does their body turn blue, but the skin cracks deeply, until the red flesh is exposed. The bodies of the hell beings crack fifteen to sixteen times like that of the petals of a lotus flower.

The last of the cold hells is the hell with bodies of multiple cracks. Not only does the skin and flesh crack, but hundreds and thousands of cracks appear on their bodies like those on a great lotus flower. This is the severest of the cold hells, and can be likened to the severest of The hot hells without respite beneath Bodhgaya. It is quite terrifying when we compare the sufferings of the hell beings to human sufferings. Normally, we cannot tolerate a speck of fire, and
try by all means to avoid it. When we are exposed to the heat of the sun, we try to find shade and seek cold drinks. Similarly, during winter, when we are exposed to a little cold, immediately we look for warmth in order to save ourselves from experiencing a suffering as minor as this. However, this does not mean that we must not contemplate and meditate on the suffering of the hell beings. In our meditation on love, compassion and the mind of enlightenment, it is extremely helpful.

Lifespan

Concerning the lifespan of these cold hells, an analogy has been provided in order to explain this. The ancient practice of measuring grains in the city of Magadha has been used as an example. Magadha is a place in the vicinity of present day Bodhgaya. In the past, during the life time of Buddha Shakyamuni, there existed the Khel system of measuring grains. Given that a standard container (godown) of those days were to be filled with 80 khel of grains of sesame seeds, and if someone were to take out a single grain every hundred years out of that container, the number of years taken to empty that container of sesame seeds would be equal to the lifespan of a being in the blistering cold hell, the first of the eight cold hells. In this way, the lifespan of each subsequent cold hell is explained to be twenty times longer.

Question: Incredible suffering takes place on the physical plane, because we have this body of flesh and bones. Do the hell beings have the same body, because their suffering seems to be incredibly strong?

Answer: It seems that hell beings do not have a body like us which is made of flesh and bones etc., but they possess a mental body similar to a body we experience in our dream state. The body we experience in our dream state is not an earthly body but is a mental body; still this mental body responds to sights, smell, sound etc., and experiences sensations. The bodies of hell beings are just like this.
Question: What goes on after life?

Answer: After life, beings normally pass through the intermediate state of existence. This is also a mental and not a physical body. Our death means the separation of our body and consciousness. I mean the separation of this earthly body, which loses connection. One becomes a bardo being after death. The suffering and happiness experienced in the bardo state are similar to what we experience in our dream state with this earthly body. Since I have already talked about bardo in the preceding passage, I shall not repeat it here.

Yesterday, there were several questions raised by some of you regarding the concept of hell, and I understand that some of you were of the opinion that explaining about hell beings and their suffering was like torturing a boy by beating him and not by giving advice. I had that impression. It is not so. The purpose of doing dharma practice is not only to seek happiness and pleasure in this life, but to seek means to alleviate great suffering to which we are all subjected within this cyclic existence. With this motivation, a person tries to alleviate the suffering and look for means to overcome it through spiritual practices. In fact looking for means to end continuous and incessant suffering within cyclic existence is the purpose of dharma. The attainment of the state of liberation and enlightenment are its ultimate purpose.

In order to know suffering and be aware of its nature, it becomes imperative to know the basic teachings - the difficulty of finding this precious human rebirth, death and impermanence, round of birth in this existence, and, finally, the principle of cause and effect. All this makes us rethink seriously what constitutes of this cyclic existence, and when studying it, we know that there are six types of beings - human beings, gods, demigods, hungry ghosts, animals and hells. Thus we come to study hells, their environment, the nature of suffering and lifespan.

The sufferings of the neighbouring hells

There are sixteen neighbouring hell realms, four in each direction of each of the eight hot hell realms. What are they? There are the
neighbouring hells know as: 1) the glowing ember 2) the swamp of corpses 3) the path of razor blades, and 4) the unfordable river.

There are two ways of taking rebirth in the neighbouring hells. There are those who are born directly in the neighbouring hell without remaining in one of the hot hells, and then there are those who first remain in one of the eight hot hells and are gradually born in the neighbouring hell with the lessening of their karma to remain in the hot hell. For example, when a person finishes his karma to remain in the reviving hell realm, he then passes through each of the four neighbouring hells surrounding the reviving hell realm.

**Nature of suffering**

The first of the four neighbouring hells is called the burning ember. The nature of suffering of this hell is such that the hell beings encounter hell guardians carrying terrible weapons, who rush forward and attack them. While escaping from this, they encounter burning, smouldering embers everywhere, which can be likened to logs of wood burning to form a collection of red hot embers. When they walk over it, first, one of their legs sinks knee-deep into the embers, which consumes their skin and flesh. As soon as they raise it and step forward, it is immediately healed, but the other leg again gets burnt to the extent of leaving only the leg bones. In this manner they have to cross a long distance walking over the burning ember ground enduring endless suffering until their karma is exhausted.

Gradually, when their karma decreases, they begin to generate a sense of longing for cold, and find themselves in a swamp of corpses of humans, animals like horses, dogs, pigs etc. This is the hell of the swamp of corpses. As they walk over the filthy, stinking corpses, they start to think, "If we were to walk in that swamp we would get relief and pleasure," in their desperate attempt of looking for freedom from the environment of burning embers. However, when they actually get there they find themselves drowned in the swamp of corpses, in which they are devoured by worms and insects with iron beaks and teeth as sharp as the tip of a pin. Painfully, they succumb to their injuries with their flesh and skin completely tattered. This is the neighbouring hell of the swamp of corpses.
In this way, when their karma to remain in that hell realm is nearly finished, they encounter from a distance a very pleasant surrounding full of green pastures, blue ponds and vegetation. As they walk closer towards it, they find themselves trapped amidst paths filled with razor blades, swords and weapons. When they start walking, their legs sink into the path of weapons and are wounded or torn apart, but as soon as they lift up their legs, they are healed immediately. This cycle of suffering goes on until such time as their karma to remain in that hell realm is over. This is the hell of the path of swords and blades.

As their karma further reduces, they find themselves longing for cold, tortured by heat and thirst. In their hunt for water, they see from a distance, a huge, blue, calm lake from a distance but as soon as they reach nearby they notice that it is a sea raging with torrential waves. When they go to drink it, lamentably, not only do they not discover that it is undrinkable they also discover that the sea has turned hot and boiling water where they sink deep down to the bottom and are scalded to the extent of leaving only the skeleton of their bodies. Then, when their bodies float on the surface, they are healed again, only to sink down in the sea again and experience the same cycle of suffering. When they try to run away, they are obstructed by the hell guardians, who carry dreadful weapons in their hands and stop them. Sometimes they are being taken out of the sea and led to the burning ground surrounding it, where the guardians ask them, "What do you want?" When they reply, "We need nothing but some water to drink," molten copper and iron are poured into their mouths, or when they answer, "We want nothing but some food to eat," the guardians force them to chew burning hot iron balls. In this way, these hell beings succumb to death through great injuries. This is the nature of suffering of the hells of the torrential sea. These are the four neighbouring hells.

Besides these four, there are also others forms of neighbouring hells such as the hell of the forest of swords and knives and the hell of the *shamali* tree. These hells seen from a distance are a beautiful and attractive forest in which the trees are heavily laden with ripe fruits and flowers. Allured by this, the hell beings run towards it due to the force of their karma. However, as soon as they reach it they
find to their utmost surprise that the branches of the trees have transformed into swords, knives, spears, needles and the like. Then fierce wind storm blow and rattle the branches, which fall on them like a shower of rain and smash their bodies. Their wounded bodies shoot out blood. At times, pieces of flesh fall out, and hundreds and thousands of animals like dogs and vultures etc., come to devour these. After all these pains and sufferings, again they revive, and immediately experience the same suffering again and again. This is the nature of suffering of the hells of the forest of swords and knives.

The hell beings of the shamali trees hear cries of their close associates such as of their wives, husbands, children, relatives and friends of past lives calling them for their help. But as soon as they climb up the trees from where they have heard the calls, they find that the flowers, and fruits etc., of the trees have transformed into sharp swords and knives, which fall down right on them, thus piercing, wounding and slashing their bodies. In panic, as soon as they climb down the trees to rescue themselves, they find the trees in their original form again, from where they hear calls of their past associates seeking their help. But when they climb up, they are tortured as before. At times, when they fall unconscious on the ground, vultures, crows and hawks descend down on them and relish their eye-balls, flesh and bones etc., but again they revive and experience the same suffering a number of times. In this way, these hell beings have to endure their sufferings for a long time.

With this we have finished the explanation of the neighbouring hells surrounding the hot hells. The neighbouring hells of forest of swords and knives and that of the shamali trees are counted only as different forms of the hells of swords and weapons. Thus each hot hell surrounded by the sixteen neighbouring hells is known as (nye-khor theg-pa bcu-bdun) the seventeen levels of the neighbouring hell realms.

Life span

Although it would be difficult to specify an exact duration of the life span of these beings, in view of the different karma each individual hell being has, this can be as long as hundreds or thousands of years
of miserable life. Hence the life span could vary.

The sufferings of the occasional hells

Next follows discussion of the occasional hells. In these hell realms the environment is very much like that of the neighbouring hells. The occasional hell realms exist near the neighbouring hells on earth, in the ocean, under the ground, in the mountains and rocks. We may, therefore, say that there is no place where they do not exist.

The sufferings of the occasional hells are many. Those who live close by the neighbouring hell of burning embers are affected by the heat of burning embers, and those in the ocean experience a surrounding filled with blood; those living in the mountains experience the hardships of inaccessibility etc. Eating each other, enjoying pleasure during the day but pain during the night or vice-versa, is the suffering of the occasional hells. Their life-span too is extremely uncertain varying from each other. As we know, there are various types of sentient beings, like worldly gods, snakes, demons, spirits, mountain dwellers, and the eight classes of female spirits. In fact these constitute different forms of occasional hells.

I have actually seen two occasional hells in Tibet. In the region of Kongpo, among rocks, once I saw a huge lizard who possessed all the features of a normal lizard but was not able to move anywhere because he was impaled by a rock. There were, however, small lizards around him who looked after him, provided food and helped him to survive. Such are the sufferings of an occasional hell.

Question: If a hell being is a mental projection, does it appear in a physical form?

Answer: Generally speaking, most of the hell beings are projections of the mind in the sense that they have a mental body. However, the beings of the neighbouring hells do have physical bodies also. You may wonder how I knew that the lizard I had seen was a being of the occasional hell. It so happened that Khyagyab Dorje, the 15th Karmapa, was travelling in that area and saw the lizard. He recognised it to be so through the force of his insight, prayers and
aspiration and called together many people and asked them to destroy the place. Even so the lizard appeared again at the same place, in the same form, impaled by a piece of rock, and it is said that the lizard had lived there for many years. Later, when people informed the Karmapa Khyag yab Dorje that the lizard kept reappearing, his answer was that there was no way to help him out as it was his karma to live at that place in that form. He then mentioned that it was an occasional hell being. On another occasion, the following incident happened in my monastery when I was twenty-seven years old. We were reconstructing part of the monastery. The monks collected rocks, and once, when a huge rock was cut through the middle, they found a frog living right in the middle of that rock. He was trapped in it, could not get out in search of food etc., but still survived. I can only guarantee that he was a being of the occasional hell. He saw the sky only that moment and disappeared. If that being is not an occasional hell, then what could it be?

Let me give you a practical example of occasional hells. This happens very often in Tibet. Some persons when they die, just before their very last breath, mourn, scream, wail and cry very loudly, especially, when their associates tell them that their life-force had left. These things indicate imminent rebirth as an occasional hell being.

What lesson do we learn from listening to the stories of hells? It teaches us to be aware of our activities and behaviours. We must not commit non-virtues, particularly hatred, because it is hatred that is primarily responsible for rebirth as hell. Hatred is a very negative aspect of our minds. From beginningless time until today, we have generated so much hatred that has become a cause for taking rebirth in the hell realm. However, in this life time, we must endeavour not to accumulate hatred but virtues. This present life as a human being and the future as a hell-being are very close. It is very easy to become a hell being simply by leaving this body at the last breath, of our life. To become a hell being is easier than walking down to lower Dharamshala. We need not hire a taxi or board a vehicle. Simply with the cessation of our breathing the consciousness travels wherever the karma directs it. We human beings have caused a karma of hatred, so much so, that our rebirth as hells is imminent. Let alone having accumulated such karma since beginningless time, in our daily life,
even since yesterday, how many instances of hatred have must we have accumulated? All these become causes for our rebirth as hell beings. If we know the causes for rebirth in hell and the suffering of the hell beings, why don't we still not shed hatred and take the essence of this precious human rebirth when we have freedom to do dharma practice and have all the necessary facilities for it? Why we not exhort ourselves to do dharma practice right now. The great Nagarjuna in his *Letter to a Friend* says:

> Having attained the extremely great pleasures of celestial realms.  
> And even Brahma's bliss of non-attachment,  
> Again one undergoes incessant suffering as kindling for the fires of *Avici*.

> When he has attained the state of sun and moon,  
> The light of one's body illuminates the entire world.  
> Yet returning again to the darkness, not even his outstretched hand is visible.

When we see paintings of hells, hear and reflect upon various accounts of hells, reflect on the sufferings of hell found in the works of the Buddha and great lamas, are we not frightened? Some of us are exhorted to do dharma practice. For instance, in China, it is the tradition to have paintings of hell beings on the walls of the monasteries so that visitors may see them and get an idea of what hell beings are like. When we feel scared and are unable to bear just the images of hell, how do you think we would be actually able to bear this as a hell being? Aren't we afraid?

The author summarizes his teachings on hell states by remarking that the causes of rebirth as hell beings are the most serious negative actions of body, speech and mind, which are condensed into the ten non-virtuous activities and the five heinous crimes. He then advises us to make every effort not to commit these negativities and make every effort to practice virtues.

With this, we have finished discussion of the eighteen types of hell beings. You must know what these are; otherwise, you will feel embarrassed when asked about them. In *Nyingma Lamrim* by Patrul
Rinpoche, we find an embarrassing story in this context. Once an arrogant, fully ordained monk came to see Lama Zhang Rinpoche, who had the impression that the monk was very pure and learned. He claimed that he had received many discourses. When the Lama asked if the monk knew the eighteen hell realms, the answer was, "Yes, I do." When he was asked to enumerate them, the monk calculated the eight cold hells and the eight hot hells, but did not remember the neighbouring and occasional hells and said, "The other two are the Red Hat and the Black Hat Karmapas," since in those days the Red Hat Karmapa and the Black Hat Karmapa were both very famous. How can these two great beings be hells and how can one imagine them going down to a hell realm? This was a very pitiable and defamatory reply. The monk himself had earned a very serious non-virtue. It would be very embarrassing if you could not recollect the eighteen hells and had to give the name of your friends instead. So please remember the names of those eighteen types of hells.

The sufferings of the hungry ghosts

Now, we will discuss topics concerning the sufferings of hungry ghosts. This can be explained in three parts: 1) environment 2) nature of their suffering, and 3) duration of their life span.

Environment

It is said that the realm of the hungry ghosts is five hundred yojanas below the earth. This is, however, a very specific geographical measurement explained in a certain context. It is not necessary that all hungry ghosts must live below the earth. Hungry ghosts can exist anywhere on this planet, in the mountains, beneath the earth, in the water, in the air and otherwise. As explained earlier, the environment of the hot hells consists of hot metal, molten iron, and burning iron embers, hot iron plates, but the environment of hungry ghosts is such that whatever place they move to it lacks water, vegetation, and the surrounding has an ashy appearance. Forest for them appears like burnt logs. However, hungry ghosts experience different environments
in relation to their karmic forces.

It is mentioned in the sutra of the Close Contemplation of Mindfulness, that there are thirty-six categories of hungry ghosts, but these can be summarized into three classes: 1) those with external obstructions 2) those with internal obstructions, and 3) those with both the obstructions. According to Nyingma Lamrim texts, the third literally refers to those hungry ghosts who lack necessities for survival instead of being faced with both obstructions to finding food and drink. The meaning however remains the same.

*Nature of suffering*

The hungry ghosts with external obstruction are constantly tortured by hunger and thirst. They suffer constantly from the despair of not finding food and drink, and from their tireless efforts in search of these. Their bodies become emaciated, merely covering the skeleton, like the body of a person who suffers from chronic illness such as tuberculosis. They have tiny necks, big and blown up bellies, lanky hair without any lustre, and, however much they look for food, they do not find even a mouthful. Some of them, due to their karma, see in the distance forests and gardens where they expect to find something to eat, but as soon as they come close, they find that the forests have turned into dry trees without leaves, flowers and fruits. Others, who see oceans and rivers with cool water at a distance find nothing but dried up seas or pools full of pus and blood as soon as they come closer. They are thus always unable to satisfy their hunger and quench their thirst and suffer incessantly.

The hungry ghosts with internal obstructions have extremely pathetic physical features, tiny neck and throat with the passage as small as the hole of a needle, belly as big as mountain, and legs as thin as blades of grass. With such a body, the sufferings encountered are immense. For example, because of his big belly, a hungry ghost cannot stand on his legs, and because of his tiny neck, he cannot support his head. He longs for food and drinks desperately but is constantly faced with the problem of not finding them. No matter, even if they find a morsel of food, it is extremely difficult to grasp it
into the small mouth, and even if something gets into the mouth, it is extremely difficult to swallow through his minute throat. And almost all is thrown up, and even though they can finally swallow some pieces of food, it is lost in the huge stomach. Such is the nature of sufferings of the hungry ghosts with internal obstructions.

The suffering hungry ghosts with both the obstructions of food and drink is most severe. They never find anything in reality to chew or gnaw at or drink or to eat because, by mere force of their karma, the nourishment, however small, turns into burning embers and consumes all their internal organs. Sometimes, whatever they find turns into sputum, blood and pus or other filthy substances. Sometimes their food turns into poison. Thus, their basic problem is not only not finding anything eatable. Whatever they find turns into substances that cannot be consumed by them.

Basically, all the three types of hungry ghosts suffer from hunger and thirst. They also do not find shelter. During summer they have to bear the torture of heat and in winter the severest of cold. For hungry ghosts, the light of the moon is a scorching heat, and rains are a shower of flames, and the water is pus. In their constant search for water they are completely exhausted and fatigued. Just as the suffering of hells is endless, so is the suffering of hungry ghosts. We cannot imagine a limit to the extent of suffering, environment, the physical features, and the location of the hungry ghosts, because the karma of beings cannot be determined. Be it true or not, at least some change in our attitude must follow after hearing all this, a change for better and more humanistic living in society.

I shall recount yet another story. Once a rich woman called Dro-Zhin Kye Nawa Jewa-Ri was invited for a feast by a rich and illustrious lady. This lady had four beings bound at the four corners of her bed. The lady, however, instructed Dro-Zhin Kye Nawa-Ri not to give any food to these beings, which were, obviously, hungry ghosts. During a brief absence of the lady, Dro-Zhin Kye Nawa-Ri, however, gave some food to each of the hungry ghosts out of compassion. When she threw a portion of food to each of them, to her utmost surprise, it transformed first, into husks, second, into a burning iron ball, third, a piece of flesh of the hungry ghosts' own bodies, and fourth, into pus and blood. When Dro-Zhin Kye asked why this had
happened, the lady told the following story. Once when she invited Arya Katyayana and his followers for a meal, she found that during the time of Buddha Shakyamuni, there lived a rich lady who had in her house a husband, a bride, a son and a maid servant. She invited Buddha Shakyamuni and his retinue to her house for a feast, but her maid servant took a portion of the food the night before Buddha and his retinue arrived. She scolded her maid servant for being disrespectful. The maid told a lie saying, "I did not eat first, if I did, I had better drink blood and lick pus." The son did not have faith in the Buddha and his disciples, so he cursed them and said, "Isn't it better for these shaved headed monks to eat burning iron balls then to relish our meal?" And then the bride said, "Isn't it better to eat my own flesh than to serve Buddha and his disciples?" The husband shouted at her, saying, "Why did you not serve the Brahmins before these monks were fed? Let these monks eat husks." As a consequence, in this life time they were born as the four hungry ghosts. This warns us that we should be careful of any projection of our thoughts.43

**Life span**

As we know, thirty days is one month. Considering a month as one day of the hungry ghosts, the maximum life span of a hungry ghost is five hundred years. Nagarjuna in his *Letter to a Friend* however, says that some hungry ghosts live up to five thousand years and others do not succumb to their injuries even during a life of ten-thousand years.

The specific cause of rebirth as a hell being is hatred and anger of strongest intensity, and the specific cause of rebirth as a hungry ghost is miserliness. For example, people who are very attached to their wealth, no matter how much they possess, always suffer from fear of losing it and are, therefore, even reluctant to make offerings to the Three Jewels. They are also not ready to give anything in the form of charity. Many of them are even reluctant to use their own wealth for their welfare, but are only concerned with amassing riches. Such acts of miserliness lead to rebirth as hungry ghosts. Therefore, we must be conscious of such acts and their retribution.
The sufferings of the animals

Next, we shall deal with the suffering of animals. Here, the author does not give a specific explanation of the nature of their environment, suffering or their life-span, which is because he takes it for granted that we are all generally familiar with the lives of animals, their location and suffering. Anyhow, according to this text, there are two categories of animals, those living in oceans and those scattered all over the earth.

Environment

The animals living in oceans refers only to those that live in the great oceans. Here in this context, the so called great ocean needs a little explanation for better understanding. The Buddhist cosmology as explained in the Abhidharma text has the following details. There is Mount Meru, the king of the mountains in the centre. In between the four cardinal and four-sub directions of the mountain are the seven golden mountains and the seven salty oceans. Surrounding these golden mountains and the salty oceans, there is what is called the great ocean on the edge (mth'a-yi rgya-mtso chen-po). The animals living in the great ocean refer to those who live in this ocean and not to all those living in water or oceans. These animals neither see the sun nor moon. The surrounding is completely dark not leaving enough light even for their arms to be visible.

It is said that these animals think of this ocean as their home, and have no protection and no friends elsewhere. They are constantly driven hither and thither in all directions by torrential waves. Animals like crocodiles, snakes, fish and shell fish are some of the species known to us; besides these, there are innumerable others, from the mightiest as big as mountains to the tiniest as small as specks of dust. There are hundreds and thousands of them whose names are totally unfamiliar to us. Buddhist explanations has it that some of these animals are so huge that they could wound up even Mount Meru. These are the types of animals.
Nature of suffering

Generally, the water of the oceans and seas being salty, the animals experience intense pain by that mere fact. And they constantly torture one another. The larger devour the small, and the tiniest torture the larger by burrowing into their skin, making their homes there, laying eggs and multiplying etc. It seems the karmic duty of these animals is to torture one another, and that is their life. The nagas are also considered as a class of animal living in water. They are constantly afraid with the belief that hot sand may fall from the sky and bury them. They are afraid of the Garuda birds attacking them. In this way they pass their life. This is a brief explanation about the animals living in the ocean.

According to the Nyingma Lamrim text, the animals scattered all over the earth are divided into two categories, the wild animals and the domestic animals. The wild animals are of five types: a) birds with wings that can fly ('dab-chags gshog-pa-can); b) animals with claws (spyan-gzan lder-mo-can); c) animals for hunting sports (ri-dvags sems-can); d) animals that may be reared as a symbol of fortune (gyang-bdag) and, e) animals living in water (chu-gnas sems-can).

It appear as if these animals have no sufferings and are very happy, but when we look closely we will see that even those wild animals that appear to be happy and free suffer a lot. There are, for example, the falcons (khra) that eat and torture smaller birds, and birds eat insects, hundreds and thousands a day. Leopards are particularly very fond of killing wild dogs. There are hundreds of such inharmonious pairs of animals. When we examine, we find the animals are born to harm each other. Similarly, there are those animals which we human beings kill for their flesh, skin, and for their inner organs. Tigers (stag) and leopards (gzig) are always afraid of hunters. In India and China, antlers of deer (sha-ba'i rva-cho) are an expensive article of pride, very costly, rare and precious, and because of this, even the most serene animal, the deer, falls prey to this demand of human beings. The deer are peaceful animals, but during summer, when they frolic in the pastures relishing fresh grass and water, their minds remind them of hunters, their enemy. Similarly,
the musk deer are a very precious animals to human beings only because their musk (gla-rtzi) is costly and useful and has medicinal value. Let us say this much is sufficient for introducing the wild animals and their suffering. The author explains the second category of animals, the domestic, in the context of life in Tibet. There people tame animals for many purposes, for wool, skin, flesh, milk, butter, cheese, protection and cultivation of fields etc. However, Tibetans cruelly tame them by piercing their noses, binding their limbs, beating and whipping them and forcing them to carry heavy loads, especially on narrow paths in steep mountains and across rivers. People kill animals for meat, and hunt them for money. Some are murdered for sacrificial offering, which is, fortunately, now not extant among Tibetans. But it is still very common in India and Nepal. You hear stories about how Tibetans kill animals for meat; it is terrible. Instances of this is nature are endless. Generally, animals are considered dull and ignorant of merits and demerits. But, I personally feel, the fact that domestic animals cannot talk is most unfortunate.

*Life span*

Concerning the life span of animals, it is said that there are some who survive for aeons. Then there are those whose life lasts only a couple of years, months, weeks, days or hours. Certainly, we see insects, incredible in number during the break of summer, who appear in the morning and die by noon. In general, most of the domestic animals live between two to ten years if they are allowed to lead their normal life. Hence, the life span of animals is very uncertain because of the great variety of animals.

At this moment because we have this human rebirth, we are able to compromise sufferings and pain to some extent, but even than we are unable to bear the slightest of sufferings. For instance, when we are asked to bear the pain of burning our fingers in fire, we cannot stand it and say, "No, it is impossible." Don't we? Similarly, during winter we cannot stand the cold weather and in summer the hot weather. If we were asked just to spend an hour in a place filled with ice and snow alone we cannot really bear it. Can we? This shows our lack of spirit and inner strength. To fast for a day or two is almost
impossible, but a single day of suffering of these hungry ghosts from not finding food and drink is five hundred times more severe in nature. Thus when we meditate, we must think, "How difficult it would be for me if I had to bear all these sufferings of a lower rebirth;" we must generate a strong sense of remorse and despondency against this samsaric life, wishing to free both ourselves and other sentient beings from the sufferings. In this way try to generate a strong renunciation, a wish be to free from this samsara. It is with the help of this kind of mind that you will be able to take the essence of this present human rebirth endowed with the eight freedoms and ten leisures. This is the way we exhort ourselves to the dharma. With this we have finished discussing the suffering of the three types of unfortunate migrators, and this will be followed by an explanation of the suffering of the three happy migrators.

Question: Do the nagas live under earth. Are they considered spirits?

Answer: Generally speaking, nagas are not necessarily spirits of mental projection; they may be embodied in different forms, and, generally speaking, it is believed that these nagas live in oceans, seas, ponds and in the trees and hills.

Question: There are a lot of people who live in the countryside and they are very much aware of spirits and nagas. People in cities are less aware of them. Is there a reason?

Answer: This seems to be true. The people who live in the countryside believe in spirits and nagas more than those in the city. It could be because these people are more orthodox and their mind is ruled by belief. This is particularly true of Tibet. When there is a special rock, a tree, they believe and say nagas live there. Such belief rules their minds. People in the city, as you said, seem not to say so much of such things because their minds are more scientific and the living conditions are different. But generally speaking it is not a matter of believing or not. People have too many pre-conceptions, and this means things like nagas and spirits do exist more.
Question: Which is better, to believe or not to believe?

Answer: It is better if you do not believe in these things. When you assert that these things do not exist, that is better. From the spiritual perspective, we take - everything gods, spirits etc.- as a mere projection of the mind, gods, spirits etc., as mental projections, as existing only through our conception. Chod practitioners believe that everything is a mental creation; there is no samsara, no nirvana; everything is a projection of the mind, and that is it. They determinedly practise Chod with such thoughts. If we are also able to maintain such a strong disbelief, then we may overcome the negative influence of such beliefs.

*The sufferings of the higher realms*

Now, we shall discuss the contemplation of sufferings of the three happy migrators, which include gods, human beings and demi-gods. It is well known that the sufferings of beings in the three lower realms are intense and manifold, but we must understand that the sufferings of the three types of migrators in the higher states are not less. Actually, the order in which the suffering of the beings in the three higher realms is presented varies, in some texts, first, the suffering of human beings is dealt with, followed by discussion on the sufferings of gods and demi-gods. However, in this text, the sufferings of the human beings are discussed first and that of demi-gods and gods later.

Basically, rebirth as a god is better than any other; however, if you may remember, in our previous classes rebirth as a god was counted as one of the unfavourable conditions for dharma practice. Why it is so? It is because the best of rebirths upon which a fruitful Dharma can be practised is this human rebirth. For this reason, human rebirth is considered superior to other rebirths. Upon this human rebirth, happiness and suffering of both present and future time are experienced; it is on this basis of human rebirth that we can balance the happiness and suffering we experience, and if we were to utilize this precious human rebirth in a proper way, it would be on this rebirth that we could carry out Dharma practice. Even if we think that in
future lives we will not need this human rebirth, we must realize that we cannot attain the state of enlightenment unless we have this precious human rebirth. Even the observation of vows and precepts of tantric practices is only feasible upon this rebirth. If we wish to attain enlightenment in one life-time like great yogi Milarepa, following the Vajrayana path, it is only possible upon this human rebirth. This precious human rebirth is essential for any kind of Dharma practice.

If, on the other hand, we were to misuse this precious human rebirth, it can cause many problems to fellow human beings. Compare the rebirth of an animal like a poisonous snake or a tiger to that of a human being. If a poisonous snake bites a person, it only harms that person, but if a human being misuses his precious human rebirth, he can harm innumerable beings. Particularly these days when scientific development has reached an unsurpassable stage at which man has now produced many dangerous weapons, especially nuclear weapons. Just by a mere command of anger, the world of humanity can be endangered unimaginably, and hundreds and thousands of human beings can be killed at a time. Such are the characteristics of the precious human rebirth. It has very strong powers to be used for both negative or positive consequences.

Once a person has taken a human rebirth, can one consider this as indestructible as a diamond? It is not; if anything looks like a diamond, it is just our ego or pride. Not only are we finally going to die, but before this we cannot escape the four types of sufferings - the suffering of birth, the suffering of aging, the suffering of sickness and the suffering of death. It is universal that every human being must undergo these experiences. There is no exception at all.

Most human beings are born from the womb of a mother through the combination of the father's semen and the mother's blood, but it is also possible that in some cases, they are also born from warmth or miracles without physically depending on parents or human beings possessing the six types of constituents. Most of us are born from the womb. The womb in which we are conceived can be likened to a fertile field which, if water, warmth etc., are present, gives a good crop. When a child is conceived in the mother's womb, the three most important factors are the sperm of the male, the blood of the
mother and the energy wind. The sperm of the father and the blood of the mother should be absolutely flawless, although it may differ due to genetic qualities. In order to conceive in the womb, we must have a karmic link with the parents to whom we are born. When the male and female constituents meet in the womb through copulation, the extremely subtle wind and mind of an intermediate state-being with karmic link enters the meeting point of these two constituents. The subtle wind of an intermediate being acts as the fundamental factor for the creation of the physical body of a new human being, and the subtle mind acts as the fundamental cause for the activation of the mind of the new human being. Therefore, it is only through the connection of a karmic link with the male and female constituents, and the subtle wind and mind in a mother's womb, that the rebirth of a person is possible. Because the scientists do not take into consideration the element of consciousness, a stream of mind, in their theory of embryology and their concept of birth, here is, definitely, the nagging point. The process of birth, in other words how conception takes place in the womb and how the embryo develops at every fetal stage, is described by Buddha Shakyamuni in the sutra called *Ananda's Enquiry into Entering the Womb* (*dg'a-bo mngal-'jug-gi-mdo*). It is really an interesting sutra, especially for the knowledge of biologists and physicians. From this we know that Buddha had knowledge of these human sciences thousands of years ago. Therefore, those who are interested may study this sutra, and we shall not deal with the process of birth here in detail.

The process of death, however, is interesting and recommended for practice, normally in conjunction with tantric practice. First, the physical elements withdraw into one another; that is to say, their energy start to weaken. These dissolve in a sequential manner. First, the earth element dissolves into water, then the water into fire and the fire into wind, and finally, the wind into consciousness. And the consciousness also withdraws or dissolves in three level of subtlety, first, into the mind of appearance, then into the mind of increase and further into the mind of attainment; and finally, this dissolves into the subtlest mind called the clear light mind. The mind of appearance refers to that stage of dissolution of the consciousness when the male constituent obtained from father descends from the crown of the
person's head into the heart centre within the central channel at his heart level. The mind of increase refers to that stage of the dissolution of consciousness when the female constituent obtained from the mother ascends to the heart centre within the central channel at the heart level. And, finally, the mind of attainment refers to that stage of dissolution when the very subtle wind and mind collapse between the meeting of the two constituents at the heart centre, and at this stage a person's clear light mind, which by nature apprehends emptiness, is manifested, irrespective of whether he or she recognises it, depending upon their practice and meditation. The realised meditators are able to seize this extremely sharp and clear mind in its peak stage realizing emptiness in full ecstatic joy, and remain in a meditative state (thugs-dam) on this for weeks; however, we the ordinary beings shrouded in confusion and misconceptions simply pass this stage unnoticed. Because of our lack of practice, many, instead of experiencing the joy, only experience suffering and our misconceptions and concerns creep into the way and direct the next rebirth. In accordance with the tantra, this is the actual stage of actual death of a person. Unfortunately, most of the doctors do not have this knowledge, and the death of a person is declared at an early stage, when a patient stops breathing. The patient is already transferred to a mortuary. At times we hear that some regain their life from the mortuary. If worse comes to worse, we might even consider these people as demons and spirits.

The sufferings of human beings

To explain the suffering of an ordinary person, take the example of human beings born out of the womb. Whether we notice or not, the mother's womb is tight, dark, filthy and oozy. Feelings of heat and cold exchanges frequently, according to the dietary and behavioural habits of the pregnant mother. In such a state of existence, we live there for nine months and ten days, with the exception of a few who are born earlier or later due to different conditions. After the completion of the period of foetal development in the mother's womb, through the force of the energy wind, the baby's head is
turned down facing the exit passage, ready to take birth, and while leaving the womb through the birth canal, he experiences excruciating pain, as if a hot iron wire is being drawn through a pair of pliers by a blacksmith. Having taken birth, a baby is speechless, helpless, empty-handed, naked, unable to lift his head or express his feelings and needs. Even when he is cradled in the lap, he experiences pains as if he were pierced by thorns.

As he grows day by day, month by month, and year by year, with mixed experiences, his schooling begins, and this stage also brings no less suffering to him. Probably, he completes his schooling at eighteen or so, for many, the peak of life. Engrossed in romantic activity also has its share of mixed experience to live with. And, unfortunately, even this youthful stage takes him from adolescence to middle age and finally to old age, where all his youthful appearance, strength and bodily features have disappeared. His body bends and becomes infirm, his limbs stiffen or become crooked, he gets fat or weak, his skin becomes elastic, his face gathers wrinkles, and in all, it becomes difficult for him to move. His speech blurs, he starts stammering and cannot hear and express clearly. All these are sufferings experienced by a person in his old age.

Imagine the types of sickness you encounter. Even though you may have a stout and robust body, when you are seized by sickness you become as feeble as a little bird. At times, you undergo pain so intense that you can hardly answer what is asked you. On top of this, the treatments that you have to resort to are, most of the time, turbulent and the medicines distasteful. Not only are you loaded with pain and miseries, but so are your relatives and friends. Finally, many factors, such as karmic forces, or harms caused by natural or unnatural disasters, make you experience death.

At death the stages of dissolution of elements and the outer and inner experiences bring incredible fear in a person of losing his being, the ego, and his belongings. The moment is pitiable for most of us. This is how our life is like a dream. Throughout a person's death experience, he struggles to survive. Yet no matter how many of his relatives, children and friends may surround him, care for him or mourn for his departure, death will not wait; it is imminent. His family, relatives, friends and others can only wish him a peaceful
death. And, they will do puja, make offerings and build statues or holy painting for him. How far these help him cannot be foretold.

Now, this is what I have told and we have all heard about; though nothing is new, this has definitely made us more aware of the practical situation of our life. This attitude should help us change to better human beings. It should soften our rock-like attitude. Nobody can save us from death, no matter how rich he may be, a millionair, owner of gold mines etc. Even the richest of all, or the most realized meditator of all, cannot save us. As has been explained in the previous classes, we must go naked, empty handed and just as we have come as a baby, at birth.

These are four types of sufferings, very natural feature of all human beings. There is no one who can escape these four sufferings, the suffering of birth, aging, sickness and death. I believe that any scientist, however intelligent he may be, can provide no means to avoid death or stop all these sufferings. One may wonder if there are more sufferings for human beings other than these four universal ones. The answer is definitely yes. Some of these are the suffering of not being able to fulfil one's wishes such as finding wealth, happiness, education. In addition to these there are sufferings separation, meeting, changes in seasons, thirst, hunger, thieves and robbery, elemental catastrophe and harms inflicted by evil spirits. Similarly, there are sufferings from inability to guard one's property, problems with the servants, retinues, dividends, shareholders and others which are unique to rich people. The poor suffer from lack of food, clothing and dwelling, the basic necessities. It is a pity that even though they work hard, their standard of life does not change. This leaves us room for much deeper thinking. I want you to give more thought to this. To quote the *Four Hundred Stanzas*:

The rich have mental suffering
The poor have physical suffering
Each day the world is destroyed
By these two types of sufferings.

As said the rich suffer from delusions and the poor from not finding basic necessities. Even though the poor work so hard that they
imperil their bodies, to the extent that they become skinny and sick, they always remain destitute. From this we can conclude that the suffering of the rich is primarily mental and of the poor physical, and hence, the question is, what joy is there in this world of cyclic rebirth? If a thinking person were to look carefully, he would find that both rich and poor suffer equally. What joy is there in life? The rich and wealthy have incredible mental problems caused from not being able to guard their possessions and not being able to increase and multiply what they have. They lack mental peace. But the inferiors, referring to the poor and destitute, have physical suffering, basically meaning suffering from lack of necessities, food, clothing and shelter. To experience either or both is the nature of this cyclic existence and so, it is said, one should keep his distance from it, meaning try to escape from this cycle of rebirth and suffering.

Let alone the suffering of beings in the three lower realms explained above, which are difficult for us to imagine, if we examine the sufferings of ourselves from birth upto only this stage of our life, I believe that is enough to confirm that our life is indeed a can of worms and nothing else. This is very true and not just a story or a myth. The most honourable thing to avoid these sufferings is to carry out pure dharma practice and to attain the state of Vajradhara. This is the thing especially Tibetans have in their culture which is supreme and worthy. Attaining the state of Vajradhara in one life time may be impossible for us, but we must at least try to use this human rebirth as best as we can. Good heart, modest behaviour, cooperation and friendship to fellow beings is something we can manage to practice. This is the least we can do to make this human rebirth worthwhile. Let us say that suffices as explanation of the suffering of human beings.

The sufferings of demi-gods

Now, I shall talk about the sufferings of demi-gods, who in Tibetan are called "lha-ma-yin", meaning neither god nor human being, so they can be likened to neutral beings.
In Abhidharma, the Buddhist cosmology is structured in such a way that Mount Meru is in the centre; then there are the four main directions, the eight sub-directions surrounded by the seven golden mountains and the seven oceans. Demi-gods abide in and around Mount Meru (ri-rab kyi khong-seng).

Nature of suffering

The demi-gods are always at war with the gods, and what is their apple of discord? There is the so-called inconceivable divine tree (dpag-bsam ljon-shing), the root of which grows in the realm of the demi-gods but the leaves and fruits of which grow in the realm of the gods, especially in the god realm of the Thirty-Three. The tree has the power to fulfil all wishes, curing sickness and providing food, clothing and all that is desired by them. This tree thus causes jealousy between gods and demi-gods. Besides, the demi-gods are also jealous of the gods' excellent beauty and magnificence. Moreover, the extraordinary physical beauty and attraction of the goddesses creates jealousy and hatred in the hearts of the demi-gods, leading to unending suffering and combat. Because the strength of merits of demi-gods is weaker than that of the gods, they always lose battles with the gods. When they are attacked by the gods, they fall and faint, injured and impaired, but unlike human beings, who normally die quicker with the slightest of harms inflicted upon their vital body parts, these demi-gods do not succumb to their injuries, but endure the torture. Gods are more resistant and cannot be easily injured or killed in the battle, unless they are hit at their two vital points, i.e. the head and the waist-line, where their immortal nectar is stored. It is also said that due to their karmic forces, whenever the demi-gods go into battle with the gods, the consequences are revealed in the All Apparent Sea. Therefore, before they return from the battle field, their wives, children, relatives and friends already know of their defeat in the combat with gods, and tremendous suffering is inflicted upon both themselves and their associates. It is because of their strong jealousy that they never find opportunity to practice
wholesome deeds and thus pass their lives in constant conflict and war with the gods. This is thus the nature of suffering of the demi-gods. This ends the explanation about their suffering.

*The sufferings of gods*

Next is the suffering of gods. The suffering of gods can be studied under two categories. 1) the suffering of the six types of gods of the desire realm, and 2) the suffering of the gods of the form and formless realms. Each of these may be discussed with reference to environment, nature of suffering and lifespan.

*The sufferings of gods of the desire realm*

*Environment*

As explained earlier, the gods have the divine tree which fulfils all their wishes. They also have an excellent abode and supreme facilities, and all their wishes are fulfilled effortlessly. They pass their lives by subconsciously utilizing the sensual objects, attracted and allured by these sensual objects and do not have a sense of having to face death.

*Nature of suffering*

The most serious suffering for gods and goddesses seems to be the imminent signs of their approaching death. They are faced with five signs of their death: a) they start to lose their physical beauty and lustre and turn into ugly forms b) they feel reluctant to stay in their celestial abodes and often want to move c) the garlands of flower that they wear on their neck fade away and start stinking d) their garments and robes of silk and brocades which are normally stainless catch dirt, become untidy and smell e) their bodies, which normally have an aromatic scent exuding from their pores, start giving off foul smells and sweat. When they experience these signs the knowledge of their death becomes apparent for the first time. Their family, friends and associates abandon them and seek the company of other fellow
gods and goddesses. This gives the dying gods extreme unhappiness, and they are overwhelmed with strong grief and awareness of death and the fact that they must forsake all their belongings, the environment and pleasures of the god realm. This lasts for seven days. However, this seven day duration must not be understood in terms of a week of this world system.

Of the six types of gods within the desire realm, the lowest in rank are the gods of the Four Great Kings. A single day of these gods is equal to fifty years of human life, and therefore, a hundred human years is equal to just two days in the life of a god. In this way, seven days of their suffering constitute as long as three hundred and fifty human years. It is also said that at last when they finally die they melt away like butter poured over a hot rock. Such is the nature of their suffering. In the Sutra of Close Contemplation it is explained that the suffering of the gods in experiencing the five signs of their approaching death is so intense that, even if the sufferings of all the sixteen hells were to be combined together, the suffering of gods at death is even more intense. Besides, other kinds of sufferings in the god realm include the stronger suppressing the weaker. As mentioned earlier, the gods of the Thirty-Three are constantly at war and in conflict with the demi-gods. Those gods who receive injuries from war with demi-gods spread the agony of the five signs of approaching death. Some who receive fatal blows and wounds on their heads, chests and abdomens in combat with demi-gods suffer for a long duration, because their death comes only at the drying of their nectar at the heart level. Let us say that with this we conclude the suffering of the gods of the desire realm.

The suffering of the gods of the form and formless realm

Now, next will be suffering of the gods of the higher realm, i.e. the gods of the form and formless realm. There are seventeen states of the form realm and four of the formless realm. It is impossible to describe the suffering of each of these, and therefore, we shall only deal with a general explanation of their suffering. It is said that though the gods of the desire realm have physical bodies made of flesh, blood and bones, those of the form and the formless gods only
have a mental body, which is called the source of perception. The gods of the form and the formless realm do not experience gross suffering as we human beings do; however, they experience what is called the pervasive suffering. The four universal sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death are no exception for them too.

The gods of the form and the formless realm are almost intoxicated with their concentration, which prevents them from achieving higher levels of attainment. They are so deeply absorbed in their concentration that they are neither worried about their future nor aware of any suffering, happiness or activity around them. They are deeply absorbed in the ecstasy of their concentration over-whelmed by a feeling of vacuity, although it is just possible that they enjoy a slight clarity of their concentration. It could be a vulgar thing, but for better understanding, I will use this example: when male and female in copulation experience orgasm, though for a very short moment, they remain totally absorbed in that state of ecstasy of experiencing orgasm, with a sense of strong attachment to its pleasure. Similarly, the gods of the higher realms also remain in a state of ecstasy in their concentration, but in a more profound and lasting manner. And it is this state of attachment which is the most serious weakness of these gods. As soon as the duration of this ecstatic state of concentration comes to an end, the gods also die. Although no series negativities were accumulated in that rebirth, because of their strong attachment to the pleasure of concentration, and the force of their past karmic residue, they are reborn in samsara again. It is also important to note that the experience of their concentration is sustained only through the force of contaminated virtues, and as soon this force is exhausted, like a shooting of an arrow into empty space, they are propelled to take rebirth in samsara, and unfortunately, most of them are reborn in the lower realm.

This tells us that in any realm of cyclic existence, from the top to the bottom, there is no happiness, and that any realm has a potential to inflict suffering on us, like any type of fire, from the faintest glow to a spark which can destroy us. The author wants us to realise that, no matter in which part of the world we live, because it is samsara, our friends and enemies survive in suffering, and the riches and wealth we acquire all have potential to inflict pain and suffering.
The nature of three types of sufferings

Besides the sufferings of the six types of sentient beings discussed above, the author lists the three types of sufferings, which are the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change and the pervasive suffering or the compositional suffering.

The suffering of suffering is like applying poison to the edge of a sword before the enemy is slain so that he suffers more intensely in the process of his death. In other words, it is what you may call throwing salt on the sore. It is explained that primarily the three unfortunate types of beings are susceptible to this kind of suffering.

The second is the suffering of change. It is, for instance, seeking cold when you are tortured by heat and vice versa. Because here, a person is definitely not looking for an ultimate solution, but a temporary change, which is, unfortunately, the other face of the same coin. Longing for longevity, seeking possessions, seeking mundane mental peace and even absorption in concentration etc. are all suffering of change, because these bring temporary sensual pleasures and not ultimate happiness. All six types of beings in the desire realm are subject to this suffering.

The third, pervasive suffering acts as the basis of the two other sufferings. It is the foundation of all other problems. A good example of this is the five aggregates. All sentient beings bound within samsara experience pervasive suffering. Even the gods in the form and the formless realm, who are absorbed in concentration, experience this suffering. Just as we must destroy the root in order to destroy a tree for ever, we must sever this pervasive suffering if we want to free ourselves from cyclic existence.

Contemplating the law of cause and effect

So far we have dealt with the sufferings of six types of wandering beings, and you must have wondered how all these sufferings arise. In fact, all these are the results of karma. This is the next topic, the law of causality. In discussing this topic, there are three headings;

1) the general contemplation of the causes and effects
2) the specific contemplation of the causes and effects, and
3) the contemplation of the four noble truths.

The general contemplation of the causes and effects

It is said in the sutra, whatever action an embodied being performs, good or bad, wholesome or unwholesome, its consequences will ripe at an appropriate time when all cause and conditions for its ripening are assembled. The imprints of karmic actions left on our mental continuum will definitely produce their results and consequences. Karmic actions accumulated will not be wasted for ever. It is natural that good and wholesome actions will produce happiness and bad and unwholesome actions will bring misery and suffering. A line in the text says, "Happiness is the result of wholesome actions and suffering the result of unwholesome actions." The meaning of this is simple and plain. If we create virtues, we will have good results and good consequences, and encourages strong efforts for bringing success in training.

A line in the text says, "the result of the virtuous action is happiness, and the result of the non-virtuous action is suffering." This means that if we create virtues, we will experience good results and good consequences. If we stop accumulating unwholesome actions, for instance killing, our lifespan will be longer, and if we refrain from stealing, we will have more resources. By virtue of refraining from committing sexual misconduct, we will have a good physical body, a charming personality etc. By virtue of not lying, people will trust us and our words and will carry weight. By virtue of not using harsh words we will enjoy praise and respect from others. By refraining from using divisive talk, we will gain the friendship of others. As a result of not indulging in idle gossip, we will achieve authority of speech, which means we will gain command over and influence of people. As a result of not committing covetousness, we will be able to generate a noble attitude or the altruistic mind of enlightenment. As a result of not harbouring harmful intentions, we will naturally generate the noble attitude of love and compassion. As a result of abandoning pervasive views, we will be able to gain insight into the most profound view. These are the positive results of the ten virtuous
actions. If we contemplate these points of the respective virtues, we will know where we actually stand.

On the other hand, if we commit ten negativities, e.g., as a result of killing, our life will be shorter and inflicted with many sicknesses. Even medicines will not prove effective. As a result of stealing, we will be unsuccessful in our venture, and will have difficulty in finding the basic necessities of our daily life and therefore, will face poverty. As a result of indulging in sexual misconduct, we will not have a charming personality and will bear a loose morality. Perhaps spouses will have difficulty in controlling each other. As a result of lying, others will insult us and will not trust us, and our words will not carry any weight for them. As a result of using divisive talk, we will not be able to have friendly relationships with others. Some people only trust their pets like cats and dogs, but are not able to trust any other people; such is the result of this negativity. As a result of using harsh words, others will criticize us, and as a result of indulging in idle gossip, others will talk badly of us, and our words will not carry any weight. We will never influence other people. As a result of committing the act of covetousness, people who have been friendly with us will gradually discard us, and in times of need they will not extend their help to us at all. As a result of harbouring harmful intentions, people will deceive and cheat us, and we cannot expect any honest dealings from them. If we hold wrong views, then we are going against the objects of refuge or the Three Jewels, and, because of that, we will not receive any protection in this or future lives.

Tibetans have a good way of looking at life. When they are happy and prosperous, they see it as blessings of the Triple Gem, but when they are in difficulty and distress, they consider it as a result of their karma. A lot of people in the west believe in the law of causality, and this belief is much stronger among easterners. Particularly among Tibetans, the belief is so deep that it has become a part of their daily life activities. Each individual nation, city, town, village and family has certain natural tendencies with or without reasons. Even within a family, we find that the sons and daughters of the same family individually have distinct interests, intellect and skills. This drives them in different directions. Some are always successful and accomplish their goals as desired, yet others, no matter how much
they try with the help of others, even with the help of their enemies, never accomplish anything constructive and fail to achieve their ventures. Why does this happen? It is because of their karma. It is only karma that decides an individual's destiny. If we think in this way, we will generate a conviction that the law of cause and effect is infallible.

Although an actions initially may be great or small, by the time of the ripening of their fruits, our actions not only multiply but become very forceful. To give an example, today we may kill an insect thinking that it will not matter much. As a result of killing an insect, although the action we have committed is only a small one, by tomorrow, the intensity of the act will have increased two fold, and by the third day, the result will have multiplied six times. And, after a month, our action will have become very grave, almost as serious as act of killing a person. This is how the intensity of actions multiply. We have a saying:

The non-virtues of a wise man,
Although grave, will become small,
But the non-virtues of an ordinary person,
Although small, can become big.

That means, if a wise person accidently kills another human being, he will regret what he has done, and every day, will apply the four forces of antidotes, counteracting forces to purify his negativities. If he continues his purification practice for months, he will have purified himself of that serious negativity. But if an ordinary person commits a grave negativity, probably he won't bother about it, and, because of his negligence, in a month or so his action will have increased a hundred or a thousand times. According to the text, that is why during the time of the ripening of his action to fruition, it will have become very serious, and he will have to experience severe consequences. In this way, a foolish man's negativities increase because he is not able to purify them or will not bother to do so. It is quite a normal thing that happens to us.

We create many negativities and think that it does not matter much, but in that way our negativities can become very serious. Some
of our negativities can become very serious by virtue of the object with regards to which we have committed them. In other words the seriousness of a negative action is also judged by the object with reference to which we have committed it. This means, if we commit any of the heinous crimes, like killing our father, or mother, or generate an ill intention to draw blood from the body of a great Bodhisattva, after death, without even going through the intermediate state of rebirth, these acts will lead us directly to Avichi hell. Similarly being angry at someone who is a Bodhisattva is an extremely serious act of negativity. The great master Chagmed Rinpoche has said that even if one were to combine the negativites of all the beings of the three realms together, it would not be as serious as the negativity of abusing a Bodhisattva. Similarly, the commitment of any negative action with respect to objects worthy of taking refuge, is very grave. This is normal; for instance, stealing something that is more valuable means more severe consequences even in the eye of law. We must understand this and try to refrain from committing such actions.

Just as a single seed of barley can produce numerous seeds at the time of its result, and a single mustard seed produces numerous mustard seeds at its resultant stage, in the same manner, our actions also have the ability to multiply at their resultant stage. Understanding this, as has been already explained, we must apply the four counteracting forces to purify our negativities.

To enumerate the four counteracting forces: your object of reliance can be Vajrasattva, visualised in the space in front of you and you yourself in front of him. Then apply the force of regret through reflecting upon negativities you have accumulated over the lives, which you may or may not remember. Then, apply the force of antidotes, through meditation upon love, compassion, mind of enlightenment, emptiness and so forth. Here, in this context, the practice of nectar purification in Vajrasattva meditation becomes a direct antidote to your negativities. Next, apply the force of pledge, in which you take vows not to commit them again through reflecting upon their negative consequences. In this way, you can apply the four forces of purification. Instead of doing purification practices, if we simply ignore them, a time will come when these will become grave,
and no one except you will be responsible for experiencing their consequences. Keeping this in mind, we must all try to do our level best to purify our negativites.

With this, we have now finished our discussion on the contemplation of karmic actions and their consequences in general.

The specific contemplation of the causes and effects

The specific contemplation of karma can be studied under three subdivisions:

1) contemplating the negativities as objects of abandonment
2) contemplating the wholesome actions as objects of accumulation, and
3) transforming unspecified actions into wholesome actions.

Contemplating the negativities as objects of abandonment

This has three categories: a) the first negativities being three of the body, four of speech and three of mind, collectively called the ten non-virtues, motivated by the three poisonous delusions -attachment, hatred and anger. b) the natural negativities being those actions that become negative whosoever commits them, and, which do not constitute a breaking of rules of moral discipline by law. For instance, negative actions impelled by attachment, hatred, anger, jealousy and miserliness called the five root delusions. c) the negativities or misdeeds by law. These constitute the breaking of vows and commitments proscribed by Shakyamuni Buddha. This has various levels of moral precepts. In the case of a lay vow holder, an Upasaka or Upasaki, there are the five precepts to be observed, known as the four root precepts - not killing, not stealing, not telling lies and not indulging in sexual misconduct - and one secondary precept, which is refraining from taking alcohol. Breaking any or all precepts become a misdeed by law, or the transgression of a vow.

Similarly, a novice monk or nun has thirty-six precepts, and a fully ordained monk has two hundred and fifty-three vows to observe. Breaking any of these constitutes a misdeed by law. A Bodhisattva
vow holder has eighteen root vows and forty-six secondary vows, and a tantric vow holder has, in addition to these, fourteen root vows, eight secondary vows and two additional vows to be observed. Transgression of any of these becomes a misdeed by law.\textsuperscript{54} Hence, we must be cautious about our actions. Any negative action we commit becomes either a natural misdeed or a misdeed by law.

Although negative actions are innumerable, roughly speaking, these can be summarised into ten non-virtues. As the Abhidharmakosa mentions:

Roughly speaking, all negativities can be summarised into ten.

Having found this fully endowed human body, if we now do not abandon the ten negativities and create the ten positive actions, then we are simply wasting our precious human life; especially, those who claim themselves as dharma practitioners are making themselves very unbecoming.

\textit{The ten non-virtues}

What are the ten non-virtues? These are the three negativities of the body, four of the speech and three of the mind.

The first negativity of body is killing. The kind of killing we are concerned with here constitutes a complete act of killing fulfilling all the four factors. The first of the four factors is recognition of the being who is killed. It does not matter whether it is an insect or a human being. It must, however, be a sentient being other than oneself. That recognition of the object of the act of killing must be there. Second is the intention to kill. This can be out of attachment, hatred or anger etc. For instance, we hunt a musk deer their musks; and we kill pigs for pork, and so on because of attachment to their flesh, skin or parts. Killing a mosquito is done out of anger. In other words, there must be a purpose of killing the object to be killed. Third is the actual act of killing. This act is carried out through the use of implements, a sword, gun, stick or whatever, until the object of killing ceases to breathe. Finally, it is the sense of contentment or satisfaction, thinking, "Good, he is dead;" you confirm that the object
of your act of killing is dead, and you rejoice at it. When all these factors of killing are complete, this becomes a full-fledged act of killing. We will have to face the consequences depending upon the value of the object of killing.

Next is stealing. If someone is willing to give you something, just accepting it is obviously not an act of stealing. But out of attachment for the property of others, we might obtain it for ourselves by any means. You may steal it or cause others to obtain it for you. In such cases, when a feeling of possessiveness is generated, thinking "Ah, I got it," then all the four factors for committing a full-fledged act of stealing are present, and an act of stealing has been committed. Stealing is a serious negativity, because if someone steals from you a thing you cherish the most, don't you feel a great sense of loss and become very sad and depressed? Others will generate the same kind of feelings if we steal their property. Even travelling without a ticket in trains and buses constitutes an act of stealing. Having stolen something from someone else then the thief has his own problems too; he has to be always on the alert so that the other person does not recognize him, or he will have to bear the punishment. In this way, this kind of negativity brings suffering to both self and others.

Sexual misconduct is committed when you have sex with the wrong person, i.e. with a woman or man married to another person, someone within seven generations of blood relation, someone under the protection of parents, the king, the leader of the locality or the nation, or with someone who is the holder of vows of celibacy. Having sex during inappropriate times becomes sexual misconduct. This means sex with a pregnant women or sex with a highly distressed person when, for example, someone has just died in the family or for other reasons. Having sex by force is also sexual misconduct. Sex at the time of the woman's menstruation is also sexual misconduct. If one indulges in sex at inappropriate places, this becomes sexual misconduct. Inappropriate places here refers to holy places such as in and around temples and stupas, at a big gathering of people, or in places in which one might contract diseases. Indulging in sex using other parts of the body other than the sex organs, like the mouth, anus etc., are sexual misconduct using inappropriate passages. The aforesaid refers to sexual misconduct committed by lay-
persons. However, any sexual activity engaged in by an ordained celibate, a monk or a nun, constitutes breach of vows. Sometimes this may lead to total transgression of vows resulting in loss of his or her priesthood. This concludes the three negativities of the body.

Up to now, we have been discussing the three non-virtues of the body. These three can be actually seen or heard about. For instance, if a person commits a murder, that is something we can see or hear about; and this is the case with stealing and sexual misconduct.

The four non-virtues of speech are telling lies, using divisive talk, expressing harsh words, and engaging in idle gossip. What constitutes telling a lie? It involves another person whom you try to deceive. You tell him something that is untrue. If the other person is convinced that what you have told him is true and understands the meaning of it, that constitutes telling a lie. According to the author of this text, lying is not something that can be committed only by speech, but the non-virtue of lying can also be committed through gestures of the body. If your friend has gone to Mcleod Ganj and another person asks you about your friend's whereabouts, then if you gesture with your hand pointing downwards towards lower Dharamsala instead of pointing to Mcleod Ganj, and if that person is confirmed that your friend had gone to Dharamsala, that also becomes the non-virtue of lying.

Using divisive talk means making statements or expressing words causing a rift between friends, or making unfriendly people even more inharmonious. Telling someone, for example, that another person intends to kill him although there is no such possibility, or making people more distant by recounting bad gossip to them, etc. are divisive talk. If someone intends to split friends to cause friction between them, and succeeds, that also constitutes the non-virtue of divisive talk. Using divisive talk does not necessarily have to be rough speech; in fact, sweet and pleasant talk can be more injurious.

Using harsh words also means to criticize others. For example, if you criticize monks and nuns who have given up their robes and have adopted the lives of lay-persons, and talk to them in a derisive way, saying, "Now you have given up your monkhood, you have a family, that means you have lost your vows, you have lost your pledges etc.,” this will disturb their mental peace and their feelings will be severely
hurt. Using such expressions constitutes the non-virtue of using harsh words. Similarly, if one talks in a derisive way chiding persons who have lost a limb, or are blind or have diseases like leprosy etc., criticizing their drawbacks and faults, definitely hurts their feelings, and if that person understands the meaning of your words, this becomes the non-virtue of using harsh words. We should be careful of such talk and try very hard to avoid it.

What is idle gossip? Idle gossip is neither lying nor using derisive talk, nor harsh words; it is none of these, but it means engaging in singing songs, chatting about vulgar things, performing dramas, dances etc., with no special purpose but only to distract oneself and others, with the exception of those who perform professionally. Others who engage in such activities idly and unrelatedly, or, for example, talk about battles fought in wars, gossip concerning business, i.e. about the profit others made from a certain sum of money etc., such talk becomes idle gossip. Others like to engage in vulgar talk among youths, male and female, or engage in sensual talk, or on topics that generate wrong views, for example, talk about the non-existence of the Law of Cause and Effect, and saying that there is no life after death and so forth. If someone were to engage in such talk, what would be the result of it? It would mislead and distant the listener. If such talk generates negative feelings like attachment, hatred and anger in the hearts of others, it naturally leads to accumulation of non-virtues within one's continuum and therefore, this is something to be avoided at all cost. Engaging in such talk is called engaging in idle gossip. Sensibly speaking, it is a waste of precious time.

Here I would like to tell you about my own opinion regarding idle gossip. I am particularly concerned about this, because I feel if idle gossip or rumours inculcate jealousy and hatred and anger and create disharmony among people that leads to the generation of non-virtues. However, instances like engaging in gossip about love affairs etc., these, I feel, do not harm anybody because this type of gossip does not bring disharmony; it is something everyone loves to talk about. Engaging in talk like this does not hurt others' feelings either. Hence probably this type of talk is safer. However, idle gossip concerning drama, cultural performances, war etc. can lead to a negative concep-
tion, which will also hurt the feelings of and can cause enmity with others. It must be avoided. If, however, one engages in idle gossip for the sake of entertainment without hurting anybody's feelings, this is a little safer thing to do. This is purely my own opinion.

Unlike those acts of non-virtues associated with the body - taking life, stealing, and sexual misconduct - which can be physically seen or heard about, the above four acts associated with speech cannot be seen by us. But they can be heard about and are also capable of deceiving the mind of others and making them feel distressed. For example, lying about something and divisive talk can be heard. This is also true of harsh words and idle gossip. However, the three non-virtues of mind which we are going to discuss are the most serious in the sense that these three cannot be seen or heard about. A person can quietly carry out these in his heart for himself alone.

The three non-virtues associated with the mind are covetousness, harmful intention and wrong views. What is covetousness? It is connected with all ranks of people, the superiors, those who are equal to you, and the subordinates. The object with respect to whom you commit these three actions can be someone you do not like, someone you know, your friends, or your enemies. You covet their belongings, their dwellings, their wealth, their retinue, their children etc., thinking, "I wish I had those things, I wish I had authority over all he possesses," and so on. Whatever device you use, hinting, deception or magic, if you succeed in acquiring what you covet, with your motivation set for it, then this becomes the non-virtue of coveting.

Next is harmful intention. The object is someone you hate or are unfriendly with. If some misfortune happens to them, for example, a member of his family dies, and if you pray, "May the Three Jewels bless me and make him suffer," making such prayers is to have harmful intention. It is not necessary that a harmful intention should inflict harm on others, but just harbouring evil thoughts on others become harmful intention. Grudges and notes of revenge kept in your heart constitute this. This can be serious, for every time you generate it, your anger, your jealousy and hatred are also aggravated.

The last of the ten non-virtues is holding wrong views. What is a wrong view? Denouncing the concept of the Law of Cause and Effect, pronouncing good karma or activities resulting in happiness
and bad karma or activities resulting in suffering as untrue becomes wrong views. We must be aware of the fact that, because we have not seen or experienced subtle spiritual values, we cannot profess their non-existence. "Unless one makes efforts to become self sufficient, looking for one's own food, one's dwelling etc., there is no karma that bestows all necessities;" if someone were to speak this way against the law of causality, that becomes one of the wrong views. Similarly, it is a wrong view if one criticizes the principle of rebirth, saying, "There is no such thing; how can you prove this?" There are people who ask, "Can you prove rebirth to me, can you show me a person who has died and was reborn again?" Of course, the answer is yes, but it is difficult to make the other believe if he lacks some philosophical background. Similarly, to talk about, think or assert the non-existence of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha becomes a wrong view. We must avoid talking this way and stop harbouring such thoughts. Wrong views can be misleading not only for oneself but for millions, especially if they are presented in the form of a book in this modern age. There is room for war between different religions and faiths simply because someone has expressed wrong views.

These three non-virtues of the mind cannot be seen or heard about, but an individual is the best judge of himself, whether he has committed the three non-virtues of the mind, i.e. covetousness, harmful intention and holding wrong views. The other seven non-virtues are comparatively less serious, but we must try our best to keep a distance from committing these. The three non-virtues of mind are so deeply hidden in our hearts that, if you are not honest and careful and realize you could easily neglect others' feelings, you may put yourself at a great risk in the lives to come. Of these ten, holding of wrong views is the most serious non-virtue.

Why is holding wrong views the most serious of the ten non-virtues? Any person who holds wrong views actually asserts the non-existence of the law of causality and the non-existence of past and future lives thereby refutes the law of causality, the action and their fruits. Take, for example, the first of the ten non-virtues, killing. A person who asserts wrong views is in principle asserting that the result of killing somebody is non-existent. He is actually refuting the evil consequence of killing, because he is refuting the working of the
law of causality. In this way, he is even negligent of the preciousness of his own life. Similarly, he is also refuting the evil consequences of taking what is not given. This logic applies to all the following non-virtues. A person who holds wrong views is refuting the consequences of committing all non-virtues, and for this reason holding of wrong views is the most serious type of non-virtue. He is standing against the universal convention and conventional truth.

The non-virtues explained here refer to fully characterized non-virtues. Take for instance the act of killing. A fully characterized non-virtue of killing must have a specific object which is a person other than yourself, then an intention to kill, then the actual act of killing, and finally rejoicing upon its completion. These four factors are necessary in order to commit a fully characterized non-virtue of killing. Similarly, with stealing, taking what is not given must have an object belonging to others, a wish to possess that object, the actual act of stealing, and finally taking joy over having possessed the article of theft for yourself and for making it one's own. If these four factors are complete, then the theft becomes a full fledged non-virtuous act of stealing. The same law is applicable to the non-virtue of sexual misconduct. The object must be a person other than one's own, the intention to possess that person, the act of being in copulation with the other person and rejoicing in it upon its completion, i.e. upon having enjoyed the orgasm. If these four factors are complete, then the fully characterized non-virtue of sexual misconduct is complete. The author says that the non-virtues he has explained here in this text refer to fully characterized non-virtues fulfilling the four features. However, in the committal of non-virtues there are many levels, and even Buddha has said that if an act is not committed deliberately motivated by an intention, then even the five acts without respite, e.g. killing one's father have different levels. If a son were to kill his father in an accident, this does not constitute a fully characterized non-virtue of patricide, because the son did not have the intention to kill his father. The result of a fully characterized act of killing one's father is immediate rebirth in hell without even taking rebirth in the intermediate state. Buddha has said that there are various levels in terms of seriousness and consequences of the killing. If a killing is characterized by all the four features mentioned above, i.e. the object,
the intention, the act and rejoicing in the deed, it becomes a fully characterized non-virtue. Any act of non-virtue may be motivated either by attachment, hatred or closed mindedness, or by an intention which is neither virtuous nor non-virtuous. Whatever degree of non-virtue a person commits, it can be either intentional or accidental or neither. This applies to all the ten non-virtues, the three of the body, four of the speech and three of the mind.

The results of non-virtuous actions

a) the fully ripened results
b) the results that correspond to their causes, and
c) the environmental results

The fully ripened results

The maturation of the fully ripened results depend on the strength of the motivation, associated with desire, hatred or closed-mindedness. The strength of motivation means the degree of the causal motivation, strong or weak, compelling a person to commit the non-virtue. The ripening results of these three poisonous intentions are respectively as follows. Generation of very strong hatred would result in rebirth as a hell-being; very strong attachment or desire would result in rebirth as a hungry ghost; and very strong closed-mindedness would result in rebirth as an animal. It is the strength of the motivation or intention that decides the ripening results of the three root delusions as explained above. Once a person takes rebirth as one of the beings in the three unfortunate realms, the sufferings to be encountered are intense as has been explained earlier in previous classes.

The results that corresponds to their cause

The second type of results that corresponds to the non-virtuous actions has two parts: 1) the resultant experience that corresponds to its causes, and 2) the resultant habits that correspond to their causes.
The resultant experiences that correspond to their causes

Experiencing of the results corresponding to the cause with reference to the ten non-virtues would be as follows: As a result of killing, your life-span will be short, or you will be sick with chronic ailments for a long duration. As a result of stealing, no matter how much you try to amass wealth and riches, you will experience poverty. If you commit the action of sexual misconduct, you will experience much enmity and slander. The result of telling lies is that people will always back-bite you and criticise your dealings.

The action of engaging in divisive talk will result in loss of friendship or lack or trust in you by your friends. The result of uttering harsh words is that you will always hear negative things about yourself; your reputation will be bad. As a result of engaging in idle gossip, your speech will not carry weight, people will dishonour your words instead of obeying them. As a result of coveting others' qualities, possessions etc., however much you try, your wishes and goals will not be fulfilled. The result of holding malicious intention against others is that you will always find yourself in an unpleasant environment, unpleasant climate like being in a dusty, misty and foggy place or overwhelmed by fear and anger, fear of wild animals, fear of the law of the country. The result of holding wrong views is that you will be born as a stupid fool or a gullible or extremely dull minded person.

The resultant habits that correspond to their causes

What are the habitual results corresponding to their causes? A person will acquire habits corresponding to the karma he has committed in the past. For instance, as a result of killing, hawks and cats are habituated to kill others, cats naturally take delight in killing mice and rats; similarly, if you have an instinctive desire to kill others, it is certainly the result of your karma corresponding to its cause. As a result of stealing, you will love to steal and rob others property. Donkeys and dogs and even some human beings who love to commit sexual misconduct face the consequence from sex diseases as the result of their habitual engagement in this. Some human beings have
the natural habit of telling lies, that too in a very beautiful manner; this is not an art, but actually they are ripening their karmas of telling too may lies by way of natural habits in this life time. Also taking pleasure in using divisive language to create schism and ruin relationships of people, groups and nations, can be termed as results corresponding to telling lies in past lives. Similarly, inclination towards using harsh words and taking pleasure in idle gossip are all the habitual results of having committed these acts. Coveting others' possessions, and having the habit of holding wrong views, are the consequences of habitual acquirement of similar actions committed in the past. All these shows that the habitual results of a person correspond to the karma of a person committed in the past.

The above two, i.e. the results corresponding to their cause and habitual results are directly associated with the person's characteristics, personality and habits, whereas the environmental or circumstantial results, though they do not have a direct bearing on the person's habits, however, effect him indirectly by virtue of his subsistence in that environment.

The environmental results

To explain briefly, the environmental results of the ten non-virtues are as follows. As a result of killing, the environment will have poor crops, and if you are sick, your medicines will have little effect on you. As a result of stealing, you will be born in an environment where droughts, flood and scarcity of crops prevail, and, as a result of sexual misconduct, you will experience an environment full of clouds and dust, an unpleasant surrounding, for instance, lack of clarity during day and night. As a result of telling lies, life will be spent in a filthy surrounding, for instance, the life of worms living in excrement. As a result of having committed the non-virtue of using divisive talk, you will be born in an environment of steep cliffs and precipices or close ravines. If someone is born in water, like a fish, you will have to encounter tempestuous storms all the time. The result of committing the act of using harsh words is that you will be born in an environment like Ladakh, where in some parts vegetation and water are totally lacking, and life is extremely difficult. As a result of
Engaging in idle gossip, you will be reborn in an environment where the four seasons of the year are erratic and unpredictable; rain, heat of sun and cold etc. will be unreliable. The result of covetousness will be rebirth in a place where the crops will be poor, lacking nutrition and energy. The result of holding malicious intention will be rebirth in an environment where crops will lack nutriments; curd, milk and butter though be available in abundance, but will lack nutrition, proteins and vitamins. As a result of holding wrong views, you will be reborn in an environment where there is acute shortage of crops and at times total scarcity of food and drink. An environment where famine occurs will be the result. These are the ten environmental or circumstantial results of having committed the ten non-virtues.

Out of these results, the fully ripened result is something that a person experiences by taking rebirth in any of the three unfortunate realms; however, the results corresponding to the causes and the environmental or circumstantial results are something that we experience even now on the basis of this human rebirth. It is extremely important to avoid creating causes of bad results. This finishes the topic, contemplation of the non-virtues as objects of abandonment.

**Contemplating the virtues as objects of cultivation**

Now, we shall deal with the next topic, that is, contemplating virtues to be cultivated. Generally speaking, virtues are antidotes to the non-virtues. There are 84,000 heaps of doctrine taught by Buddha Shakyamuni against an equivalent number of negative emotions: 21,000 heaps of doctrine concerning Vinaya teachings as opponent to desire, 21,000 heaps of doctrine concerning Sutra teachings as opponent to hatred, 21,000 thousand heaps of doctrine concerning Abhidharma teachings as opponent to closed mindedness, and, 21,000 heaps of doctrine as opponent against the combination of the three poisonous delusions. These eighty four thousand doctrines fit with various mental dispositions, intellectual calibres and the levels of practitioners of the doctrine. All these 84,000 doctrines are summarised, for the sake of convenience, into the ten virtues and their opposites, the ten non-virtues. It is extremely important, as human beings, to try to
abstain from committing the ten non-virtues; particularly, abstention from committing the three non-virtues of the mind, which cannot be seen or heard about, must be guarded very cautiously.

What is actually meant by abstention from the negative activities? It is to be aware of the demerits, faults or drawbacks of the nature, function and consequences of each of the ten non-virtues and generating a wish not to commit them. Taking the example of the first non-virtue, killing, if you wonder how to apply immediate antidotes and contemplate on its demerits, take yourself as an example of a person to be murdered. How anguished and terrible you feel, how happy you are if someone comes to your rescue: You realise the preciousness of your life and the feeling within you or your family, relatives and friends of your life being precious. Apply this logic to the other person to be killed by you. You will certainly like to avoid the act of killing. Once you become balanced from your emotion at that time, then again meditate and contemplate on other aspects of the faults of the act of killing. Certainly you will learn more and will cultivate a habit of avoiding committing an act of killing. Try to gradually make this a habit. This is applicable to the rest of the non-virtues. In the case of other two non-virtues of body, stealing and sexual misconduct, also you should try to cultivate a sense of their negativities immediately upon considering committing these two actions. This is applicable also to the four non-virtues of speech and three of the mind. One thing I want to mention is that we learn a lot from habit. Why not cultivate the habit of immediate application of antidotes to negativities?

What is actually the wish to abandon, the wish not to commit non-virtues? It is a thought within oneself, the thought that sees negativities as inappropriate, immoral and inhumane. Generation of such a thought within oneself enables one to practice the abandonment of non-virtues. Such a thought is considered an unmistaken attitude even on the conventional level, not to mention its justification in moral or ethical realms. Once you are able to do this, you are also practicing the morality of refraining from negativities, and this is in fact the force or energy of your motivation to cultivate virtues. The more strongly you have this type of intention, the firmer are your virtues, so much so that this type of intention incorporated in your daily life
will even keep you awake in deep sleep, thus enabling you to abandon the negativities. You may call this an inner call, a positive energy or the perfect observance of morality. In fact, what we learn from the above is the cultivation of ten virtues.

Now to discuss the opponents of the ten non-virtues. Physical virtues constitute making prostrations, circumambulation of temples and other holy places and making offerings to the Three Jewels, working physically for sentient beings, for the sake of the Buddha dharma and for the sake of one's own Dharma practices. All these actions primarily become opponents to non-virtues associated with the body. The virtues associated with your speech refer to uttering words in praise of the lamas, deities, hosts of meditational deities, praising their body, speech and mind, the three principles, and engaging in the incantation of their mantras, in conjunction with guru yoga meditation.

All these constitute antidotes to non-virtues associated with speech. Virtues collected in association with the mind constitute showing devotion to objects of refuge, contemplating the thought of seeking release from cyclic existence, contemplating love, compassion, mind of enlightenment, emptiness and impermanence.

If you wonder what are the results of engaging in virtuous activities: just as we have discussed the three types of results in association with the ten non-virtues, similarly, here also there are three types of results, with regard to the ten virtues also, which are:

1) the fully ripened results
2) results that correspond to their causes, and
3) circumstantial or environmental results

The fully ripened results

Concerning the fully ripened results, no matter whatever virtues you practice among the ten virtues, it is important that they have three factors complete. Namely, at their primary stage, these must be conjoined with the mind of enlightenment, at the intermediate stage, these must be conjoined with objectiveness or signlessness; and at their conclusion, these must be conjoined with the practice of
dedication. Whatever virtue a person practices, if these are conjoined with all these three factors, they becomes the most superior type of virtue. The virtues that are conjoined only by two of these factors become a middling type of virtues, and if a virtue is not conjoined with any of these three factors, it becomes an inferior type of virtue.

As a result of these, when a person accumulates the superior type of virtues, he will take rebirth as a god in any of the higher realms. There are seventeen types of gods within the form realm and four within the formless realms. Through the accumulation of the intermediate type of virtue, one will be reborn as one of the six types of gods in the desire realm, and with the inferior type of virtue, one will be reborn as a human being. It can be said that if a person accumulates the first type of virtue, the most superior type, let alone taking rebirth as a god of the higher realms, this can also result in the state of liberation and the state of omniscience. However, if a person collects a modest virtue, because of his impure motivation, this will result in rebirth as a demi-god.

The results that correspond to their causes

Concerning the results corresponding to their causes and environmental or circumstantial results, the author treats them together in the root text. We will try to explain them separately. Basically, these results must be understood as being just the opposites of those results corresponding to their causes and environmental results of the ten non-virtues explained above. In other words, results of the virtues must be understood as opposed to the environmental and circumstantial results of non-virtues and vice versa. The author quotes the Precious Garland as follows:

- Long life, good resources and no-enemy
- Praise, fame and pleasant speech
- Respect for speech and wish fulfilling
- Mental peace and increasing wisdom
- Are the ten results of virtues corresponding to their cause.

As explained above, the virtue of abandoning the non-virtue of killing
will result in longevity; the virtue of abandoning the non-virtue of stealing results in the accumulation of wealth; the virtue of abandoning the non-virtue of sexual misconduct leads to freedom from enemies and harm; the virtue of abandoning the non-virtue of lying will result in honouring of praise by others; the virtue of abandoning the non-virtue of divisive talk leads to a good reputation and fame; the virtue of abandoning the non-virtue of using harsh words results in hearing only good and pleasing words; and the virtue of abandoning idle gossip leads to trustworthiness, i.e. your orders etc., will be obeyed; the virtue of abandoning covetousness leads to the fulfilment of wishes and goals; the virtue of abandoning harmful intention leads to a peaceful state of mind and happiness; the virtue of abandoning wrong views leads to clear wisdom, knowledge and skilfulness. These are the ten results of the ten virtues corresponding to their causes.

The environmental results

What are the environmental or circumstantial results arising from engaging in the ten virtues? By virtue of abandoning act of killing one will live in a country where the king, the ministers and the leaders of the country will be majestic, worthy of loyalty by his subjects etc. By virtue of abandoning stealing, the crops of the environment will be excellent, there will be no famine, cattle etc. will abound, and dairy products will be nourishing and found in abundance. By virtue of abandoning sexual misconduct, the environment will be pleasing and joyful to everybody, and facilities will be pleasant to everybody. The virtue of abandoning lying leads to a beautiful and pleasing scenic environment. The virtue of abandoning divisive talk leads to an environment of fertile fields; people will be generally well off; they will possess wealth, all evenly distributed without much gap between the rich and the poor; there will be not many enemies, not many thefts, no robberies. The virtue of abandoning the use of harsh words leads to an environment of increasing and abundant pastures, vegetation and water. The virtue of abandoning idle gossip leads to the timely occurrence of the four seasons of the year; summer and winter will be mild and balanced, with an endurable climate. The virtue of abandoning covetousness results in crops and fruit being
nutritious. The virtue of abandoning malicious and harmful intentions leads to an environment including dwellings and clothing congenial to everybody; if people want soft and warm clothing, they will find it, according to the seasons etc. The virtue of abandoning wrong views leads to excellent crops which increase, and no matter what task one engages in, be it business, intellectual, or professional, whether taming others, encountering enemies or cherishing one's friends and family, all wishes will be fulfilled spontaneously, without exerting much effort. In short, the *Precious Garland* says:

Powerful, good harvest, delightful
Equality of high and low, and fertile land.
Growing vegetation, and normal seasons
Tick crop, nutritious food and plenty crop
Are the environmental results of ten virtues.

Now, basically the author summarizes the teaching on ten virtues as follows: from the depth of your heart, you must be determined not to commit non-virtues and cultivate virtues instead. This determination must become a part of your daily discipline. Without doing this, if you were to simply pray, "May I be protected by Buddha, the lama, the Dharma, and the Sanga," this is impossible. Take for instance even the fulfilment of mundane desires and goals, if a person has to simply relay on others for food and clothing, isn't it difficult? Therefore, it depends totally on an individual's initiative and efforts, the manner in which he engages in those to be cultivated and those to be abandoned. Merely saying "May the Three Jewels protect me, the Lama bless me so that my goals are being fulfilled," will never bring virtuous results. This concludes the section on the contemplation of the virtues as objects of cultivation.

*Transforming the unspecified karmas into virtues*

Third is the contemplation of the unspecified activities. What are these unspecified or neutral actions? These are actions that are neither motivated by faith and devotion such as the contemplation and meditation on the mind of enlightenment and the right view, nor
by negative thoughts such as desire, hatred or anger. Actions that fall into this category are eating, drinking, roaming about here and there, going for walks, just sitting idly, sleeping etc. The author says that there is never an end to this kind of meaningless actions. Take the instance, a single day of our life. We get up, eat breakfast, lunch, supper, and in between we have all kinds of engagements; it never finishes. Just think back how many years of this human life we have spent engaging in these kinds of things, not showing any constructive or significant results. These are neutral actions, but the author instructs us that it is important to be able to transform these neutral actions into virtues.

How to transform all these neutral actions into virtuous activities? It is by way of conjoining one's wish with the mind of enlightenment. If one's thought and attitude are conjoined with the mind of enlightenment, then all these neutral activities can be transformed into virtuous activities. The *Four Hundred Stanzas* says:

> When you have the mind of enlightenment  
> All virtuous or non-virtuous (activities)  
> Transform into excellent goodness  
> Because your mind is under the force of virtue.

Accordingly if your wish and attitude is conjoined with the mind of enlightenment, let alone virtues of any level, even non-virtues, activities one may have collected can become virtuous. Also *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

> From that time hence,  
> Even while asleep or unconcerned,  
> A force of merit equal to the sky  
> Will perpetually ensue.

When you generate the wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of others then from that day onward, no matter what actions one engages in, like sleeping, eating, walking, and being distracted to things external, the flow of merits one collects will be incessant; there will be a continuous flow of virtues arising within oneself equal to the
expanse of space, never ceasing. It is, therefore, important that one's wishes are conjoined with the mind of enlightenment, in order to transform all actions into virtuous actions. The meaning, kinds and generation of Bodhicitta has already been explained above (See page 59)

It is, therefore, by way of generating this mind of enlightenment that a person can transform all his or her activities into virtues; however, this can also be practised by a simple thought transformation. For instance, as you get up and open your door, simply think, "I am opening the gate to liberation." "I am opening the gate to enlightenment." This becomes virtue, and you are accumulating merit, and again while closing the door, think, "I am closing the door to bad rebirth," and these acts become virtue or dharma simply by virtue of generating this motivation.

Taking the example of eating, for instance, if you were to eat not with a sense of attachment to the food but with the thought that you are making offering to yourself as a deity or an enlightened being this is purely a spiritual meal. Especially, for those of you who have received initiation of the Highest Yoga tantra it is fitting to think that way. In order to activate this thought, according to Nyingma tradition, you conjoin with the practice of making an offering to the host of peaceful and wrathful divinities known as the hundred supreme Buddha families, thinking - all that appears as the father, Dharmakaya, the Samantabhadra, their being empty of independent existence as symbolizing the mother Dharmakaya, Samantabhadra. The five aggregates as the five Buddha family, and the five elements as their consorts; the eight categories of consciousnesses as the eight Bodhisattvas; the eight objects of these consciousnesses as the eight female Bodhisattvas; the six delusions as the six types of Buddhas; the four wrong views as the four guardians, and the four forms of birth as the four female guardians. These are known as the forty-two peaceful divinities of the hundred divinities.

Next, the fifty-eight wrathful divinities constitute of the principal father Samantabhadra and mother Samantabhadra in the form of Chechog Heruka, upon these the five Buddha families in the form of father Heruka and their consorts makes the ten wrathful Herukas, then there are the eight yogin Bodhisattvas, the eight yogini Bodhi-
sattvas, the four outer guardians to the four cardinal directions and the four inner guardians within the mandala, and the six dakinis of the eastern direction, the six dakinis of the souther direction, the six dakinis of the western direction, and the six dakinis of the northern direction, in all twenty-four altogether makes the fifty-eight wrathful divinities. Amongst the forty-two peaceful divinities listed above in their wrathful manifestation the two principal deities are not counted here in the context of listing the fifty-eight wrathful divinities. Thus these fifty-eight wrathful divinities in addition to forty-two peaceful divinities makes what is known as the hundred supreme Buddha families. While eating one can actually visualise or imagine that all these divinities are present upon one's own human body. You simply have to know how to activate them in juxtaposition with your daily activities. When taking a mouthful of food, one can transform the meal into offering of tsog to these divinities. While taking food into the mouth recite RAM YAM KHAM. Think, RAM symbolises the digestive fire that consumes it; the YAM is the wind element that spreads it; and KHAM is the water element that purifies it. With the recitation of OM AH HUM, think that your meal has been transformed to an offering of hundreds and thousands of tastes. In this way, think that a tsog has been offered to the host of the hundred supreme divinities. If one were to conjoin one's mind in this way each time one takes food, even that becomes an extremely meaningful practice of dharma. Similarly, when one is putting on clothes, robes, one may transform them into divine robes made of silk, brocades etc. and think that one is offering them to the host of divinities visualised upon his own body. You may say these practices are simple yoga of eating, sleep, waking and others.

If activities like making circumambulation and making prostration are conjoined with the mind of enlightenment - for example, making a circumambulation of the Library, which contains so many sacred objects like icons, images and collections of teachings etc. - they become a worthwhile dharma practice. Until today, no matter whatever activities we may have engaged in - eating, sleeping, walking, working - we have been only attracted to the external qualities motivated by a sense of attachment or hatred etc. But we must actually turn our mind inward and examine what our mind is
doing, examine the mind while engaging in these things. Why not conjoin our intention in tune with the aspiration of Bodhicicitta and direct our future course to better future lives by adding more merits upon our mind stream?

One of the pre-eminent features of tantric practice is its convenience in the application of what has been explained to you. Through employing various visualisation techniques as in tantras, you make all your activities better and more wholesome. You don't carry out tantric practices by merely listening to the teachings, but by being practical in terms of its application. This is fair. Knowing these benefits of tantra, we must make effort to transform even our neutral activities into virtues by thought transformation practices explained in various sutras and tantras.

A Summary of the Four Noble Truths

According to the text, contemplating the law of causality has three main outlines, and up to now we have already dealt with the first two of them; now the third main outline concerns the Four Noble Truths.

What is meant by a summary? To give an example, in India there are many states, but all these states constitute one nation, India. Of all these states Delhi is the most important city, being the capital of India, and all the other states are connected to Delhi for one or another reason. Similarly, although the Buddha taught 84,000 bundles of teachings, all these merge into the teaching of the Four Noble Truths; in other words, there is not anything that Buddha has taught that is not included in the Four Noble Truths. It was during the first turning of the Wheel of Dharma or during his first public discourse at Varanasi, after full enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, that Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths to the five ascetics.

What is meant by the word truth? The Tibetan word for truth is Denpa, which means non-deceptive, unmistakable, real, hence, trustworthy or infallible. Normally, a person who always speaks the truth is called an honest person, and everyone believes in what he says and place trusts in him; but chances are there that he may still change. However, here we are talking about the kind of truth that will never change, deceive us or cheat us in any way because this
conforms with the law of nature.

Although we say that karmic actions and delusions are the causes of all the sufferings that we experience, in reality, different types of delusions, mainly the three poisonous delusions first, motives us, and, motivated by them, we create karmic actions. We may have been motivated by attachment, hatred, closed mindedness or ignorance and then have performed many actions. Negativities and unwholesome actions are simply innumerable, but broadly speaking they can be classified under ten negative action. As was explained earlier, the three negative actions of the body are killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; the four of speech are lying, using harsh words, divisive language, and idle gossip; then the three of the mind are covetousness, harmful intent and holding wrong views. In short, all negativities are classified under these ten non-virtuous actions. If a negative action is of great intensity, as a result of it we take rebirth as a hell being in any of the hell states. If the intensity of our negative actions is of a middling intensity, then we take rebirth as a hungry ghost or as a preta: And if the intensity of our negative action is weak, we take rebirth as an animal. These are the different levels of the results of negative actions. That is why we say that karmic actions and delusion are like seeds; when the seeds are sown, and facilitated with various factors, then they produce shoots. Similarly, when we sow seeds of karmic actions and delusions, then due to the force of law of dependent arising, all consequences are produced and experienced. The text says because karmic actions and delusions act as causes, we see different beings in the three realms of existence - the desire, form and formless realm. Response to all the above problems are contained in first two truths, the Truth of Origin of Suffering and the Truth of Suffering as a result.

In accordance with the infallibility of the law of cause and effect or dependent arising, in order to achieve Buddhahood or supreme enlightenment, we have to activate the seed within our mental continuum which enables us to achieve Buddhahood or supreme enlightenment. As the text says, if we make dedicated efforts, physical, verbal and mental, to practise those things which accord with supreme enlightenment, they act as causes, and as a result we achieve supreme enlightenment or Buddhahood. Included in the
practices leading to enlightenment are, most important of all, the altruistic attitude or Bodhicitta, the noblest attitude, and then the feeling of anxiety, called a sense of renunciation, a wish to be free from the cyclic existence, the understanding of profound view, and the practice the six perfections, such as generosity etc. Practising all these things which accord with supreme enlightenment we shall achieve supreme enlightenment, and simultaneously achieve the two bodies of an enlightened being or kaya, the Dharmakaya or Truth Body and Rupakaya or Form Body. The Dharmakaya, which is also called the ultimate body, is an enlightenment body meant for oneself, whereas the Form Body, which is characterized by major and minor marks, is meant for other sentient beings, in order to promote the welfare of others. We able to achieve these results from conducive causes because of the non deceptive nature and infallibility of the law of dependent arising. These are included in the next two truths, the Truth of the Path and the Truth of Cessation.

These four are referred to as the truths of Superiors, because a superior (Arya) sees these are true and unmistaken. Generally speaking, all phenomena in the state of cyclic existence and beyond cyclic existence are included in the Four Noble Truths. In other words, whatever is found in the state of liberation where the realized practitioners of the two lesser vehicles enjoy solitary peace, as well as anything we find in cyclic existence - all that appears to us, all that we can hear and all deluded thoughts and disturbing conceptions that arise in ourselves, all of these - can be included in the Four Noble Truths. That is why the text says that even the practices that are to be adopted or followed are also included in the Four Noble Truths.

When Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths, first, he remarked about the true suffering; Buddha was skilful in doing that. First he introduced the sufferings sentient beings experience, and then he talked about how all those sufferings arise, what caused their arisal etc. In this way, he introduced the true cause of suffering. Some might think, when he talked about these two truths, he should have talked about the cause of suffering first and then the true suffering, but Buddha was skilful in his presentation and made us first realize what the sufferings and miseries we experience are, and then introduced us to the karmic actions and delusions, the causes or
origin of sufferings. Then, in order to introduce the ways of removing sufferings, he taught us the true path, which consequently results in our achievement of the true cessation. That is the order Buddha followed while explaining the Four Noble Truths. However, the author of this text, Minling Terchen Gyurmed Dorjee follows a different order here. Instead of talking about true suffering first, he starts with the true cause of suffering. I am following the order of this text.

The truth of origin of suffering

Tibetan word 'Kunjung.' 'Kun' stands for everything. Everything within cyclic existence has developed from its source, which means the source of everything that we experience in cyclic existence, be it sufferings, happiness or neither, is rooted in ignorance; thus we have a nature of misery. Because of ignorance, we are not able to understand emptiness which is the reality of the basis and inexpressible in the sense that we cannot express emptiness as it is realised. That is why we fail to understand what emptiness is while explaining it at a certain level. This could be one of the meanings of its being inexpressible. The reality of the basis in other words refer to the Tathagata essense - the Buddha nature present in us. As the text says: "no doubt the luminious nature of the mind of sentient beings has the essence of Tathagata; nevertheless, it is deluded by the force of adventitious stains..." This has the following meaning. The essence of Tttagatha pervades all migrators or sentient beings. This means that all sentient have the Buddha nature or the essence of Tttagatha, and that is why everybody can become an enlightened person eventually.

In the tantric texts Buddha makes the same statement but uses slightly different words. Often we find that the word 'mind of enlightenment' is used for the Buddha nature of our mind uncontaminated, undefiled and pure in its natural state; it is pure and clear and a Buddha. In its essence this means that all sentient beings are in reality enlightened beings. This is because all sentient beings possess the essence of Tttagatha, the Tttagatha-garbha. Of course this does not mean, despite our present contaminated form, we can claim to be enlightened person; if we did, we would just proclaim our
ignorance. With these physical and mental aggregates, we have different consciousnesses, the eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness etc. In our mind different thoughts arise. All this proves we have a mind or consciousnesses. What is their basic nature? Their nature is pure, not contaminated, and is empty, but we are not able to express it, i.e. present emptiness as it is or as one who has understood it. We are like a dumb person who enjoys the flavour of molasses but cannot describe whether it is sweet or sour. In terms of understanding emptiness and speaking about it, we are just like a dumb person, even though the nature of our mind is clear and pure, undefiled, uncontaminated like refined gold. In the case of gold, its nature is very pure, and if it becomes contaminated, the best person is only a gold smith who can purify it. But they have difficulty in identifying its state of being a gold. However, with respect to the nature of our mind and its status of being in the nature of emptiness, there is actually no difference between that of an enlightened person and ordinary beings.

It is due to our ignorance, the two types of ignorances, inwardly developed ignorance which prevents us from realizing the clear nature of our mind, and the intellectual projected ignorance, due to which we make all sorts of discriminations, impose different levels of qualities and take some as being more attractive and others as unpleasant. Because of these two types of ignorance we find ourselves in a state of confusion wandering in different state of cyclic existence. These two ignorances essentially are rooted to the ignorance of grasping at self. Due to this ignorance, we grasp at our aggregates to be the self or of the self, in other words as 'I' or 'mine.' We have five aggregates, form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness. We grasp at them as the 'self' or 'I' and 'mine' and experience different levels of sufferings according to the degree of intensity of our grasping.

Among the five aggregates, four are not visible to us, but their existence can only be felt. What is obvious to us is the aggregate of form, which is this physical body. If we carefully examine grasping at "I," it is extremely difficult to define, recognise and find it. Although different parts of our body have different names, we can talk about my head, forehead, ears, nose, hair, eyes, tongue, mouth, lips, chin,
cheeks, throat, hands, feet, palms of our hands, different fingers and thumbs etc. From the torso, upper part of our body, down to the lower part of our body, we can normally feel that our concept of "I", or "mine" does arise at different points. However, a careful analysis will show that we cannot find these referent objects or parts of the body upon which the grasping at self is generated, although we do generate these conceptions of "I" and "mine" on our body.

If we cannot find the "I" we place upon different parts of our body, why do we develop these conceptions? This text has an answer for us. It is because of these two types of ignorances, innately developed ignorance and intellectually projected ignorance, that we grasp at different things as I or mine, and also consider their mode of existence to be so, when it actually is not. Due to intellectually projected ignorance, which is more active and intelligent in its own way of misconceiving things, we project different thoughts or qualities onto objects and then consider some as more attractive or repulsive than they really are. In other words, some objects appear to us as attractive, and we become attached to them, and others as repulsive and we have unpleasant feelings about these. We consider some people as friends and others as enemies, for reasons that are seemingly petty when we analyze, and then there are those that are neutral to us. The text further says, all this is caused by ignorance. It is all rooted in ignorance, due to which the these three poisonous delusions, attachment, ignorance and hatred, are produced and extend their growth into the five poisonous delusions and innumerable others. The five delusions are the three poisonous delusions plus jealousy and pride.

*The three types of karmas*

This human body itself is sustained by delusions or deluded thoughts, because our mind is concealed by delusions. Yet at the same time it is a fertile field, provided our mind is attuned in a right manner. In other words, it is like farm field of a farmer which will certainly grow crops if receives adequate sunlight, warmth, water and fertiliser. If this human rebirth is surrounded abound with necessary conditions, we will certainly have a good future. Our negative or mixed actions
which result in rebirth in samsara can be classified into three categories of actions, meritorious, unmeritorious and unfluctuating. The meritorious actions or the ten virtuous actions will precipitate us to take rebirth in the fortunate state of happy migrations wither as gods, demigods or as human. The unmeritorious actions precipitate us to take rebirth in the unfortunate states as a hell being, as a hungry ghost or an animal. The third kind of actions, called unfluctuating actions, refers to actions accumulated during strong attachment towards absorption in a single-pointed meditative concentration. In such a state of absorption, the chances of gibing rise to negative action is closed, hence whatever actions we accumulate become unchanging actions. The result of such action is rebirth either in the form realm or in the formless realm. This is how different actions produce different results.

Concerning the law of cause and effect, we have already talked about it in our previous classes. Of the various delusions, the root cause of all is ignorance, and to overcome it we have to realise emptiness. The text says that as soon as a delusion materialises in our mind we should apply antidotes to overcome it. That is the most important thing for us to do. As the great master Padampa Sangye advised:

O Dingri people!
If you do not apply antidotes
As soon as the delusion arises
You forsake the purpose of dharma.

This means that as soon as a delusion arises in your mind, you should not just let it continue, but think immediately that it is just not right for it to arise and prevent it from continuing. For initial practitioners, one of the methods could be to redirect one's attention to something else, or to be patient. To give an example, if a person wants to steal something, the moment the thought comes to his mind, he should be able to remind himself immediately that it is a negative action and it is inappropriate for him to do it. He should also think of the severe consequences that arise from the negative action of stealing. This is how he should restrain himself from committing the theft. The same
applies to someone who wants to kill an animal for flesh or skin. He should remember the consequences and prevent himself from committing the act of killing. In the case of sexual misconduct, if a man wants to have sex with the wife of someone else, he should remind himself that to do so is a very negative act and unbecoming on his part, and stop himself from indulging in sexual misconduct. In the case of a woman it is the same. If one desires the man of another woman, and if she just allows her desire and wish to continue, then there is no way of preventing having sex with that person, and one plans meetings etc. But before these things overtake you, when such negative feelings arise, you should remind yourself immediately that such an action is not appropriate, is not right. That is the way to suppress or overcome negative thoughts in ourselves. That is important for us to do.

The truth of suffering

The truth of suffering is rooted in the origin of suffering. Resulting from ignorance are the three root delusions, desire, hatred and closed mindedness, and when we add pride and jealousy to them, these become the five delusions or the five afflictions. Motivated by ignorance and the five delusions the result is the accumulation of negativities and suffering. For example, through attachment, we generate the feeling of closeness and attraction towards those we love and our friends, and because of hatred we generate aversion towards those whom we do not like, and because of closed-mindedness we cultivate actions of attachment, hatred and anger. It is sure that the results will ripen, as actions have already been committed, and the result will be rebirth in any of the three realms of cyclic existence, which are the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. These three are in fact the abodes where all the six types of sentient beings take rebirth in cyclic existence and roam about.

Once we take rebirth any of the six types of sentient beings within these three realms, there is no way but to undergo the sufferings of the sentient beings of cyclic existence, which is likened to blazing fire or the nest of poisonous snakes like cobras etc. Here, different categories of sentient beings undergo different sufferings. For instance,
hell beings suffer from heat and cold, hungry ghosts suffer from not finding food and drink, demi-gods suffer from being in constant combat with the gods, gods suffer from being attracted to only sensual pleasures, and human beings suffer from not being able to fulfil their desires etc. Each category of the six types of sentient beings, no matter what kind of rebirth we take, once born in this cycle of existence there is no way but to suffer. We have already discussed these above. In this context the author quotes from the Lalitavistara sutra in which it has been said:

Through the power of craving, existence and ignorance, beings are reborn in the realm of human, gods, and the three lower realms. The five migrators are always ignorant, turning like a potter's wheel.

What is this craving? Craving is the insatiable nature of a being, not being satiated by whatever he or she is familiar with or accustomed to like those addicted to drugs or liquor. Similarly, it is true with the smokers, once they have earned the habit of smoking, have difficulty stopping it. There is a sense of inward clinging and attachment towards adopting these habits. Such an attitude constitutes craving.

Now, as was explained yesterday, we have ignorance from the very beginning like an innate nature. There are two types of ignorances as explained yesterday, intellectually acquired ignorance and innately born ignorance. Intellectually acquired ignorance refers to these habitual customs acquired through repeated practice, and craving is one of these. Innately born ignorance refers to ignorance inherent in us. These two incomparables obstructs the luminous nature of our mind - the Tathagata essence. To clarify this, just as gold found in mines is wrapped in dust, so our mind is covered with ignorance. Therefore until and unless a person is able to recognize the basic mind, he cannot be free from cyclic existence, and will only roam about within samsara taking one of the five rebirths. Here the five types of rebirths refer to hell beings, hungry ghosts and animals in addition to the gods and human beings. Demigods are excluded here because actions leading to rebirth as a demi god are neutral, neither virtuous nor non-virtuous. Since here we are concerned about the consequences
of the five negativities, listed above, the author did not list demigods. Having taken rebirth as any of these five categories of beings within cyclic existence, we have no choice, no freedom, no liberty but to undergo sufferings which we do not wish. To illustrate this, the Buddha gave the following analogy. Just as a potter turns the wheel while making pots until each pot is finished, similarly, sentient beings take rebirth in the three realms until their karma to remain within cyclic existence is complete.

The author takes further quotations from the same sutra as follows:

The three worlds are consumed
By the suffering of old age and disease.
This world without a protector
Is consumed by the fire of death.
The migrators within samsara
Are always ignorant
Like bees caught in a vase.

This shows how sentient beings are subjected to the four universal sufferings, the sufferings of birth, sickness, aging and death. Leaving aside the suffering of birth and death, the author primarily discusses the sufferings of aging and sickness. The author says that there are three levels of rebirth, in the above, below and intermediate levels. The first refers to the gods, the intermediate realm refers to state of human beings, and the below refers to realms of nagas and serpents. It is said that we roam in these three levels of existence due to the accumulation of negative actions primarily rooted in ignorance. Projected by the force of karma and delusions, we are born in cyclic existence by taking a physical basis. What we do once we are born in this cyclic existence is accumulate more negative karma, generate attachment towards those we love and our friends and aversion towards those we hate, our enemies. Generating of these negative aspects of karmas, we experience more sufferings. Like a bee that keep swirling round and round inside the vase either at the bottom, middle or at the top level, we roam about in either of the three higher states of rebirth, the worst among which is in the three unfortunate realms. This is all truth of suffering. The respective
sufferings of the all the six categories of sentient beings have been explained earlier and you already have knowledge of them.

*Truth of the path*

Up to here, we have finished discussing the Noble Truth of Origin of Suffering and the Noble Truth of Suffering. We shall now discuss the Noble Truth of Path. Before I explain this, I must mention that all the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism have a uniform presentation of the basis, the path and the fruits. The basis refers to the two truths, the conventional and the ultimate truth. The path refers to either the method aspect of path or the wisdom aspect of path, or the combined. The method aspect refers to the accumulation of merits and the wisdom aspect refers to the accumulation of insight. Fruits here refers to the attainment of the body and the mind of a fully enlightened being. The body here refers to the Form Body of the Buddha which is characterized by 32 major marks and 80 minor marks; and the mind refers to the cultivation of the Buddha's mind, the Dhamakaya. Dhamakaya is the sign of having fulfilled one's own purposes, and the Form Body is the sign of having fulfilled the purposes of others because it is through this body, the Form Body that a fully enlightened person works for the welfare of other sentient beings. 

Peculiarities, however, exist with regard to the presentation of these three basic points. I will explain the conventional truth according to Nyingma tradition. The quotation from the great Nyingma Master Longchen Rabjampa (1308-1363) has said:

The nature of the primordial mind is beyond mental concept. It is neither existent because not even the enlightened ones have seen it. Nor non-existent because it is the basis of all of samsara and nirvana. Neither, is it contradictory because it is beyond being an object of explanation.

When the author says that this mind is 'neither existent,' he implies
the ultimate truth, the lack of inherent existence of all phenomena. That is to say phenomena neither exist inherently, on its own accord, nor independent of other phenomena, because if such is their mode of existence it should have been seen by the Buddhas of the three times, which they did not see. Hence things do not exist that way. This, however, do not negate their total existence. They do exist. The words, 'nor non-existent' implies conventional truth. Because in the eye of a conventional mind there is the cyclic existence, liberation, Buddhahood and everything as an object of awareness. All these are not non-existent, because these things do exist and in reliance upon them we experience happiness and suffering. In this way the animate and inanimate phenomena exist and their existence is valid. The Buddhas have seen the mode of existence of phenomena as rooted in the mind, for mind acts as a source for birth in cyclic existence, and the attainment of all worldly and transworldly qualities such as the state of complete enlightenment. Neither are these two modes of existence contradictory because the existence of one is fully dependent on the existence of the other. This point thus raises the issue of understanding the basic mind or the primordial mind. Some call this emptiness, some call this Mahamudra and others call it the intrinsic mind or the primordial mind.

I feel it is just the matter of how we approach to understand the fundamental and ultimate nature of phenomena in our meditation. We have to cross an intellectual border to reach this infinite state of understanding.

To summarise, what has been discussed, what is this mind? It is something that has the power to inculcate conception, the power to process thoughts and thinking. The mind gives rise to all conceptualizations and all thinking. It is the source of all positive and negative experiences. The ultimate quality of this mind is known as the Tathagata essence. This mind is neither existent nor non-existential because if it were to exist eternally it should have been seen to be so by the Buddhas of all the three times, which they did not, and therefore, it is not existent. However, it is neither non-existential because it is this mind which is the source of all projections within or without cyclic existence. It is this mind which causes both cyclic existence and the state of enlightenment. Therefore, the mind is
neither existent nor non-existent. Nor are these two mutually neither inclusive nor exclusive, because we have not experienced it. Like a mute person, whose tongue consciousness has totally failed to do its function and is not able to taste a lump of molasses, we are not able to express its state of existence, because we have no experience of the real nature of our mind. Therefore, it is also inexpressible.

All the 84,000 heaps of doctrine taught by the Buddha are meant to understand this mind. But it is the entertainment of negative intentions, negative conceptualizations into our minds, which acts as adventitious stains and covers the reality of the mind. Take each single part of the body as an example, from a single hair on the head to the nails of our toes, each is imbued with a sense of clinging to the 'I,' and the sense of 'mine,' my head, my body, my legs etc. On this body we generate a strong sense of grasping at 'I' and 'mine.' If we were to analyze this, taking each and every single part of our body from head to toe, nothing of these will become 'I,' or 'mine' the way we impose them to be so. However, realized beings, those who have achieved the extremely exalted state of concentration, realize that the 'I' is a mere appearance, a projection, and from this mere appearance of the 'I' the conception of 'I' and 'mine,' he, she, they are projected.

The ten non-virtues and the ten virtues, whatever we perform, all actions, fall into these two categories. The ten virtues are refraining from the ten non-virtues, and the opposite of the ten virtues are the ten non-virtues. The ten non-virtues lead to rebirth with bodies of the unfortunate migrators, and the ten virtues lead to rebirth with bodies of the fortunate migrators.

In other words, the ten virtues and ten non-virtues may be called the wholesome mind and the unwholesome. The unwholesome mind leads to rebirth as one of the three unfortunate beings in cyclic existence, and the altruistic mind leads to rebirth as gods or human beings. Even if a person with wholesome actions does not wish to be reborn as a god or human being, because of the force of his karma he would have no choice but to be born in higher realms, i.e. the realms of god or human beings. This is the law of karma. There is no way that such a person can take rebirth in any of the unfortunate realms. The text also says that if a person were to cultivate only wholesome attitudes and virtuous activities, no matter wherever he
traveled in India, China, even to the three lower realms, because of
the force of cultivating wholesome attitudes, he would always
experience pleasures. Buddhas or Bodhisattvas who purposely chose
to be reborn in the hell realms, even if they trod on the swamp of
swords, would not experience any suffering, because their minds are
motivated and purified, and they will only experience happiness and
pleasure.

Now, how to describe this ultimate mind? It is through the causal
condition. Causal condition here refers to the Tathagata essence, the
Clear Light aspect of the mind of the Buddha nature. It is this
Buddha nature which gives rise to the total evolution of the ultimate
nature of the mind. Because of this Tathagatha essence, we are able
to accumulate merits and have access to carry out purification
practices, and the practice of the paths leading to the attainment of
the state of enlightenment. Because of this Tathagatha essence and
clarity aspect of the mind, we strive to attain higher qualities. For
anything that lacks the Tathagatha essence, such as a heap of rock
which does not have mind, there is no question of perseverance on
the path to enlightenment or higher attainments, for these are lifeless.
Because we human beings are endowed with the Tathagatha essence
we have access to all these attainments.

There is another factor. The fundamental condition refers to a
qualified teacher on whose instruction, guidance and experience an
individual is introduced to the nature of the mind and the paths
leading to enlightenment. Such a qualified and experienced guru is
referred to here as the fundamental condition. With these two factors
combined, it depends solely on an individual's initiative, effort and
perseverance whether or not he practises the paths properly.

The virtues of method and wisdom

All virtues can also be categorized into two types, the virtues of the
method aspect and the virtues of the wisdom aspect. When these two
are combined, then our virtues becomes a real cause to total
Enlightenment. What are those virtues associated with the method
aspect? These refer to the physical and verbal virtues we accumulate,
virtues collected through making circumambulations, receiving vows
of novices, receiving vows of fully ordained monks and nuns, abiding in fasting ceremonies, doing prostrations, meditation on love, compassion and the mind of enlightenment etc. The virtues associated with the wisdom aspect refer primarily to the practice of contemplation and meditation on impermanence, meditation on the perfect view, the cultivation of concentration, and the practices of the generation and completion stages etc. The most important method and wisdom virtues are the cultivation of meditation on the mind of enlightenment and meditation on the perfect view. If a person's virtues were to be conjoined with both of these, then he could be likened to a bird with both wings in perfect order, and if a person lacks any of these, no matter how strong he practices, the cultivation of the mind of enlightenment alone makes him like a bird with only one wing. It is important that a person's practice of virtues must be conjoined with both the method and wisdom aspects of the path. If a person were to practise in that way, then the attainment of enlightenment would be in the palm of his hand. Practising this way, he is also practising the noble truth of the path. To quote Abhidhamakosa, it says:

Any path that knows the suffering,
Abandons the origin of all sufferings,
Actualizes the cessation and meditates
on the paths. In short, has the characteristics of a path.

The Truth of the Path has to be cultivated in reliance upon the Truth of Suffering because, without the knowledge of the Truth of Suffering, we cannot persuade ourselves to practice the paths. The truth of suffering covers the path of suffering of cyclic existence. Without understanding the nature of cyclic existence we cannot meditate on the noble Truth of the Path. That is why Buddha first introduced us to the Truth of Suffering where he taught the suffering of various beings, hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals etc. Once a person has knowledge of these sufferings, it helps him to turn his mind towards understanding the Buddha dharma. Then an interest in practising dharma is naturally generated.

In order to know what is the Truth of Suffering, again it is
necessary to know the Truth of the Origin of Suffering, which is ultimately the ignorance which must be eliminated in order to root out all suffering. How to sever this ignorance? This can only be done through the practice of cultivating virtues and eliminating non-virtues, because a person then realizes that only through cultivating wholesome activities or virtues, which otherwise is to follow the method and wisdom paths, can he sever the root of Origin of Suffering, ignorance.

The truth of cessation

We shall now discuss the fourth noble truth, the Truth of Cessation. What is meant by cessation? There are various interpretations as to what is to be stopped. In general, ignorance, the cause of all negativities, negative motivation, and the ten negative actions explained earlier, are to be stopped. Only severing ignorance will lead to the attainment of the omniscient mind of a Buddha, free of all conceptualization and preconceptions. This is the attainment of the ultimate Truth of Cessation. The Truth of Cessation has different levels, but the ultimate Truth of Cessation is the state of Buddhahood.

The foundation upon which all these phenomena or characteristics within cyclic existence are to be ceased or stopped is emptiness, because it is through total understanding of emptiness that the root of cyclic existence, ignorance, can be removed. Although practical cessation of all delusions is possible before understanding emptiness, without severing ignorance, the final cessation cannot be achieved without severing ignorance. I must add that in order to completely sever the causes and roots of cyclic existence, reliance upon the causal Sutrayana vehicle alone is not enough. Tantric paths have a special role to play. Complete severance of the roots of cyclic existence involves dissolution of all conception and preconception into the sphere of emptiness, and this is possible only through the understanding of emptiness that completely counteracts the root of cyclic existence, ignorance.

What is this profound emptiness? It is the real mode of existence of all phenomena, the thusness or the nature of all phenomena. All phenomena here refers to all phenomena within cyclic existence such
as all the activities, appearances, beings within existences all transworldly phenomena, the state of liberation from cyclic existence, the state of Arhatship, and the Buddhahood. This ultimate mode of abidance is called the thusness of all phenomena, the unconditioned phenomena. Conditioned phenomena act as the basis of all reality, comprise all those phenomena other than emptiness. These two are also known as the conventional truth and the ultimate truth respectively. In fact, what is the nature of our mind? It is such that from the very beginning the mode of abidance of our mind is neither inherently existent, nor not existent. If so, it must be seen existing inherently by the Buddhas of three times, which they did not, nor it is not non-existent in the sense that it performs functions and is the source of all worldly and transworldly qualities. The mind is the source from which all these phenomena, functions and qualities within cyclic existence and beyond cyclic existence emerge.

Are these two modes of existences of the mind contradictory? They are not contradictory, because the mind is ultimately neither bound by any phenomenon of cyclic existence, beyond cyclic existence, nor is not totally free of these two. That profound reality of mind pervades not only the mind of sentient beings alone but it also pervades all phenomena, all activities, all causes, all qualities of suffering and happiness, the state beyond suffering, and even the state of liberation and omniscience. In fact, upon all phenomena, animate or inanimate, without exception. Also the reality of the mind and the conditioned phenomena are neither indistinguishably one nor separate, because these two have completely different definitions and identities. Just as the clouds, thunder and rain are formed with their distinct identities within the expanse of space, each and every phenomenon exists distinctly from within the expanse of reality of the mind. The reality of the mind is likened to the expanse of space spread throughout all phenomena, and the conditioned phenomena as the clouds, rain, thunder etc. All preconceptions of the mind are called conditioned phenomena, and the reality of our mind, which ultimately shares the same nature with those conditioned phenomena, is the unconditioned phenomenon. The latter is free of all elaborations, delusions. However, when it is said to be indistinguishable from basis, and not one with the basis as well, it is
because these two have completely distinct identity at the conventional level, but are inseparable at their ultimate level of existence. This profundity can be understood in the following manner just as the Buddha has taught in the Prajñāparamita sūtra as follows:

Form is emptiness and emptiness is form.
Form is no other than emptiness.
Emptiness is no other than form.

These are the four angles of presenting the nature of reality of everything that exists as being a characteristic of the nature of mind. Such profound reality is free of the extremes of externalism, the extreme of nihilism, extreme of neither being one with, nor being separate from the reality itself. The nature of our mind in its ultimate sense of reality, therefore, is free of the four extremes of existence. Apply this art to all phenomena.

According to the causal characteristic vehicle, the reality, emptiness of mind or others can be realised in reliance upon the calm abiding and special insight meditation. However, in the Vajrayana practice, a person realises emptiness by means of practising the generation and completion states of the paths. In particular, according to Dzogchen tradition, one can realise this profound emptiness in reliance upon the causal break-through path and through the paths of leap-over.62

Concluding remarks on the four noble truths

To summarize the essence of the Four Noble Truths, a person must first know what the truth of suffering is, eliminate the origin of suffering, then he must realize the truth of cessation of suffering and then meditate on the truth of path, and consequently this will result in the attainment of the ultimate truth of cessation of sufferings.

Why are the four noble truths are called truths? The truth of origin is called truth because in reality the root of suffering, which is ignorance, is explained. It is true also in the case of the truth of suffering, for sufferings in various forms explained before do truly exist, and it is not superficially created by other beings. The fact is
substantiated by our own experience too. Therefore, it is for this
reason that these two truths are called the truth. Similarly, the truth
of path is called the truth because the paths and grounds upon which
practitioners travel by virtue of their spiritual practices do exist and
are true. And it is also true with respect to the truth of cessation,
because sufferings can be severed through following the paths, and
ultimately a state of freedom from all sufferings does exist. There-
fore, these four noble truths are called truth or true. These four
principles are noble truth, because, these are truly existent as seen by
the noble beings ('phags-pa), those who have realised the true nature
of phenomena. Buddha gave a vast cycle of teachings of Sutra and
Tantra, out of which the author has synthesized a fraction of it,
primarily for the person of initial scope to practice before he attains
a path. The paths here refer to the five paths, i.e. the path of
accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation and of no more
learning.

The teachings given here deal with how to prepare yourself on the
paths in the systematic manner. As I have mentioned earlier, it
depends totally on an individual's effort and perseverance whether
one attains the results of this practice or not. If a person were to
properly follow these practices first, and then, the Vajrayana, one can
be called a wise practitioner on the right track, and for him
enlightenment may be possible even in this life time, if not at least in
a couple of future lives. We have the examples of the great Indian
Siddhas like Naropa and Tilopa, and in Tibet Milarepa, who are
famous for having attained the state of unity (zung-'jug) within one
life-time. Although many more must have certainly attained the state
of enlightenment in one life-time, it is Milarepa who is most popular.
Full enlightenment until the attainment of the Rupakaya, the Form
Body symbolizing the fulfilment of others' purpose characterized by
the 32 major and 80 minor signs, and the Dharmakaya or the
omniscient mind of the Buddha symbolizing the fulfilment of one's
own purposes, have already been mentioned earlier. It is totally
dependent on an individual's effort and perseverance whether or not
he is able to seize the ultimate fruits of enlightenment. Enlightenment
cannot be received like a gift from one's spiritual teacher.

We must know that deep within ourselves there is something, a
force or an energy, that cannot be touched or heard but can only be felt and experienced, just as we feel sensations during the dream state. This is our mind, and in it the seed of all our activities is implanted and grown, and from here, the imbalance of the body's elements are created, and we experience sufferings. All thinking persons can feel and call it true suffering. The truth of path is generally all those virtues that counteract the non-virtuous activities, and in particular all the paths of attainments within the paths and fruits spectrum of the three vehicles, the Hearers, the Solitary Realizers and the Bodhisattvas as well the paths within the mental continuum of a Buddha. The truth of cessation is the negation or dissolution of all sufferings and the causes of suffering in the sphere of the primordial awareness into the state of emptiness. A person actually gains this cessation when he is able to diminish or banish all preconceptions in the very sphere of reality from which these have aroused. When a person attains the ultimate truth of cessation, he has gained the state of a Buddha.

The nature of truth of suffering is the truth of cessation. That is, when a person actually understands the truth of suffering, then he understands that there is a stage of total cessation of the sufferings. In this way it is confirmed that the nature of the truth of suffering is truth of cessation. The nature of the truth of origin of suffering is the truth of path. When a person understands that the truth of suffering can be stopped, then questions how he thus finds that the sources or the seed of suffering is ignorance, and when he further analyses how can the source of suffering be eliminated, he finds that it is through following the method and wisdom aspects of the paths that he can bring an end to the suffering. In this way, a person will understand that the nature of the truth of origin of suffering is the truth of path, because in order to sever the root of the origin of suffering, ignorance must be severed. He has to follow that path of method and wisdom. The truth of cessation and the truth of path have an inseparable nature of elimination and realization, because it is through the truth of path that the origin of suffering and suffering can be eliminated and the truth of cessation can be achieved. Truth of cessation is gained when one realises the reality or the meaning of ultimate truth or the nature of mind, be it of the conventional or
ultimate phenomena, and this can only happen through practicing the paths and stages. This is how the truth of cessation and the truth of path become inseparable in realizing the nature of truth and generating the cultivation of the truth of cessation.

The four noble truths have also been presented through an analogy. The truth of origin of suffering is likened to the improper diet and improper behaviour due to injuries, accident or say excess or sex etc., resulting in sickness. The sickness or ill health as the consequence are likened to the truth of suffering, because once a person is sick, there must be a cause. Sickness can be avoided or cured through resorting to proper meditation, diagnosis, dietary discipline, and behaviour, and, these are likened to the noble truth of path. Total cure through treatment is likened to truth of cessation. Yet another example is given here; a person who is a miser, very reluctant to give away things, is bound by a sense of stinginess. That kind of attitude is likened to the truth of origin of suffering. Naturally, he does not practice generosity. The result of miserliness is impoverishment and destitution, which are likened to the truth of suffering. Resorting to the practice of giving, thereby giving up miserliness, i.e. practising generosity through giving food, clothing etc., is likened to the noble truth of path, and being free of suffering caused by miserliness is likened to the truth of cessation.

In short, the nature of this mind is also called the basic awareness, the primordial mind, the primordial wisdom of self-awareness, and the ultimate purity. This acts as the basis for the accumulation of all positive and negative emotions. It is from this basis that the seeds of all the ignorance appear and function, and project other emotions and negativities. It is upon this factor that the seed of removing all delusions and paths are sown. Hence it is like the sky upon which clouds are formed and as well as dissolved.

Taking refuge

From the very beginning of the text, up to now, we have covered topics like the precious human rebirth endowed with leisures and freedoms up to its last topic, the four noble truths. What is the purpose of all this? It is to enable us to encompass all the teachings
into our mental continuum, to make them indistinguishable from our mind. This is primarily in order to work for the welfare of all sentient beings and, individually speaking, at the initial level in order to make a good individual with altruistic mind and modest behaviour, a thinking person.

Judging the present predicament in which we live, it appears difficult to work for the welfare of other sentient beings, but we shall definitely have to look for someone for advice, to whom to go for refuge. In order to be able to save ourselves and other sentient beings from the suffering within cyclic existence, and from rebirth in the unfortunate realms of existence, we have to seek refuge in the Three Jewels, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. The Three Jewels themselves are free from all faults, they have realised all the qualities and have freed themselves from all faults. Taking, for example, the Buddha himself, he is an enlightened person who has realised the ultimate truth of cessation. Buddha has equal compassion towards all suffering beings. His virtuous activities knows no distinction. Therefore, the Buddha is our perfect teacher, our guide. The paths he has shown us are those to be cultivated and those to be abandoned, what is virtue and what is non-virtue. Buddha's discrimination between what is to be cultivated and what is to be eliminated, are his paths, the noble truth of the path. The noble truth of the path, shown by the Buddha himself, is the supreme doctrine, the ultimate object of refuge. The Sangha members or the followers of Buddha are our companion on the path, who abide by his law or his teachings. Sangha members are of two types, Ayra beings and ordinary beings. Arya beings are those who have already gained direct insight into emptiness. The latter, in general are the spiritual community of lay or ordained.

What is the mode of taking refuge? Having known that these are the ultimate objects of refuge, we must have faith in them, inspired by fear but by being free of fear, doubt and hope. It is improper to think, "May be they have the energy to fulfil my wishes;" to have such an idea is wrong. We should be free of all hopes, and fears. Similarly, if we take refuge in them with the hope of getting pleasure and solace from them, to fulfil our mundane goals, to free ourselves from sickness, again all these attitudes are wrong. The
actual mode of taking refuge is by placing total faith and trust in them, thinking, "May you, the Three Jewels know whatever I am going to encounter, whatever suffering and pain I am going to experience, may you Three Jewels know." In that way, if we have total trust in the Three Jewels, that becomes the actual mode of refuge. If your wish to take refuge is conjoined by the mind of enlightenment for the sake of other this practice of taking refuge becomes the refuge practice of the greater vehicle.

In the actual situation, it is very unfortunate that even among Tibetans, there are some who in their practice of dharma seem to avoid the Three Jewels as their primary object of refuge and instead adopt Dharma protectors and guardians with much stronger faith and devotion. The order of our prayers we recite is the spiritual teacher, the Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas, meditational deities, the dakas and dakinis, the dharma protectors and the guardians. Now if you place the dharma protectors in the first place of this order, this is very unfortunate, because then there is a risk that you would lose your identity as a Buddhist, no matter how strongly you try to manifest yourself being a Buddhist in your outer behaviours. I would strongly advise you never to forget the Three Jewels as the primary objects of refuge. If you were to resort to accepting other practices, like the practice of Dharma protectors etc. more diligently than you should, it would be most embarrassing in the face of other fellow Buddhists. It is important not to forget that the Three Jewels of refuge are the ultimate objects of refuge, and you must give first place to these in your practice of seeking refuge.

Now, the author gives a short explanation of the generation of the mind of enlightenment. As I have given a detailed discourse on the mind of enlightenment before, I shall leave this out and give an oral transmission to which you all may listen carefully while making your own prayers. Having concluded this short transmission of the generation of the mind of enlightenment, the author concludes the text, beginning from realising the difficulty of finding a precious human rebirth, to the end, that is discourse on the Four Noble Truths. Thus we have finished a short discourse of the main text - Jewel Ladder. As a whole, this discourse for commoners, common to both the causal characteristic vehicle of Sutrayana and the resultant
Vajrayana vehicle, is very handy and systematic. As the author says, the uncommon teachings on Vajrayana must be received only individually. These are, hence not to be discussed here. I shall, therefore, conclude the text with no further comments.

It is said that each and every subject that has been discussed in this text has a meaning, a significance, some essential point that carries weight, and therefore the author claims that whatever has been written in this text, was written neither with a sense of hatred and partisan, nor as a rejoinder to someone; nor has it been written with a sense of making favourable to or disfavourable to any particular tradition, the Gelug, Nyingma, Kagyu and Sakya. It was primarily written for those individuals who want to carry out sincere practice and wish to assimilate the thoughts into their daily life and practice. It was primarily written for those interested in doing practices, and advises that those who have received this teaching must try to incorporate these into their day to day life and activities.

I have explained at the very beginning of the teaching that there are three modes of presenting the text, laying the ground topics of the text like the jumping of a tiger, and then giving explanation of the text literally, word by word, in the manner of the pace of a tortoise; and finally, concluding the text like the gait of a lion who has the habit of gazing backward once she has climbed to the top of the mountain. Now, we are concerned with the conclusion of the text in the manner of a lion gazing back once she has reached her destination. The author says that in order to accomplish the great purposes of both self and others, which is attainment of the state of Buddhahood, one must practise properly what is to be cultivated and what is to be abandoned. It is not merely sufficient to rely on achieving one's goals only through receiving repeated initiations. He exhorts us to practice what is to be abandoned and what is to be cultivated. This advice is stainless. The author confirms this in reliance on the teachings of the Buddha, the Indian Pandits Naropa, Aryadeva, Shantideva etc. In addition to these, the author says, he has added the oral transmission lineage received from his Guru who is also his father, Sangdak Trinley Ngodrup, whose words, as vast as space, as inexpressible as the nature of mind, are extremely difficult to be put into writing. But whatever has been presented here is still
a summary of their teaching, says the author. Though their teachings are profound and deep as an ocean, unfathomable and inexpressible, however, like drops of water collected from the unfathomable ocean, he claims, he has synthesised these here, to quench the thirst of those deadly in need of water.

Then, the author explains how this text was composed. He explains that it was composed not with a sense of self-aggrandizement but with two specific purposes: in order to spread the teachings of the Buddha, and that the mother sentient beings may gain happiness and peace, finally leading to the attainment of the state of liberation and omniscience. The text was written at behest of some of his devoted disciples.

Colophon

Virtues collected from the composition of this text are likened to a great ship, and the special thought, the resolute intention, is likened to the wind through the force of which this ship is moved. This example comes from the good old days when there was no engine to push or pull the ship, and was moved entirely through the force of winds. Just as the ship takes its passengers across the seas to the other shore, which is their destination, the author wishes all sentient beings roaming about in the realms of cyclic existence to be quickly led to the other shore of the ocean. The ocean is likened to the three realms of existence and the other shore of the ocean is likened to the Jewel Land. The whole activity is likened to the ancient tradition of fetching wish fulfilling jewels in the ocean. This other shore, the land of jewels symbolises the Buddha field. Finally, the author says that this preliminary common discourse illuminating the stages of the path, The Jewel Ladder, was written with the aim of benefiting the disciples on the initial stage of practice, and concludes his text humbly, which is always a way of the Bodhisattva saying, "I, the lazy Gyurme Dorjee," have written this text.

MAY ALL ENJOY PEACE

SARVAMANGALAM
FOOTNOTES


3. The period of spread of Buddhism in Tibet before and after the coming of Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055) are known as the early and later period of propagation of Buddhism in Tibet.


5. Past, present, future and the primordial period that knows no time limit.

6. The three faults of a vessel are: a) not listening carefully like an upside-down pot b) not paying attention like a leaking pot, and c) stained with delusion like a polluted pot. First, while listening to a Dharma teaching you must entrust your ear consciousness to the sound of the teaching that is being given to you without letting it distracted towards other objects; otherwise, like pouring food into an upside-down pot, you will not hear a single word of Dharma, although you may be physically present there. Second, if you simply listen to the teachings for the sake of hearing alone and not invest your mind, like a leaking pot which cannot retain the content, no matter how much food you put into it, similarly, you will have no knowledge of practicing the Dharma and assimilating it into your mind stream, no matter how much Dharma you listen to. Third, if you listen to a Dharma teaching with wrong motivations seeking status, fame etc., or, with a mind mingled with the five poisonous conceptions like pride, jealousy, desire, hatred and ignorance, instead of the Dharma being beneficial to your mind, it will turn into anti-dharma (forces), just as pouring good food into a polluted vessel will turn the content into poison. *Kun-bzang bla-ma'i zhal-lung*, Karma Dharmacakra Centre, Rumtek. pp. 5b-7a2.

7. *Gandavyuh* sutra states: O, the son of my family, a) you should think of yourself as a sick person b) the dharma as the medicine
c) the teacher as a skilled physician, and d) the proper practice as overcoming the sickness. *Kun-bzang bla ma'i zhal-lung*, Karma Dharmachakra Centre, Rumtek. pp. 103-4.

8. The five major texts of Buddhist philosophy studied in the monastic universities of Gelug are: a) The Valid Cognition (*Tsad-ma/Pramāṇavartika*) b) The Perfection of Wisdom (*Praṇāpāramitā*) c) The Middle Way (*dBu-ma/Madhyamaka*) d) The Science of Knowledge (*mDzod/Abhidharma*), and e) The Discipline (*'Dul-ba/Vinaya*).


10. Not found.

11. These texts are: 1. The Individual Liberation Vows Sutra (*So-sor

12. This story can be found in Kun-bzang bla-ma'i zhal-lung, Karma Dharma cakra Centre, Rumtek. pp. 98b2-6.
14. Of the two accumulations (tsogs-gnyis), that of merit is predominantly responsible for producing the Form Body (rupakaya), and that of insight is primarily responsible for producing the Wisdom Truth Body (chos-sku) of a Buddha.
15. The eight classes of individual liberation vows are the vows of: 1. a fully ordained monk (Bhikshu) 2. a fully ordained nun (Bhikshuni) 3. a novice monk (srāmanera) 4. a novice nun (srāmaneriika) 5. an ordained layman (upasaka) 6. an ordained laywoman (upasīka) 7. a probationary nun (śiksamāna) and, 8. one day ordination (upavāsin).
16. The five vows of a lay person are: 1. not killing 2. not stealing 3. not indulging in sexual misconduct 4. not lying and, 5. not taking intoxicants.


20. ibid. pp. 76

21. See above, number 6.

22. These are: 1. pride of holding oneself as being more superior than the teacher 2. lack of faith in the teaching and the teacher 3. lack of interest in seeking the dharma 4. distraction of mind towards external objects 5. withdrawing the senses inside strongly and, 6. long teaching sessions. Kun-bzang bla-ma'i shal-lung, Karma Dharma Raktra Centre, Rumtek. pp.7a3-4

23. These are: 1. retaining the words but not the meaning 2. retaining the meaning but not the words 3. retaining the meaning without identifying it 4. retaining the meaning but in wrong order 5. retaining the wrong meaning. Kun-bzang bla-ma'i zhal-lung, Karma Dharma Raktra Centre, Rumtek. pp.9b1-2

24. See above, number 7.

25. Setting altar for spiritual purposes, arranging cushions and offering of mandala and flowers etc., is generosity. Cleaning the surrounding and restraining yourself from disrespectful behaviour and so forth is morality. Not harming any creatures even to the extent of the tiniest ants and enduring hardships from heat and cold and so forth is patience. Receiving the dharma teachings with perfect faith and enthusiasm through avoiding wrong thoughts of the teacher and the teachings is effort. Receiving the teachings from the teacher without distraction to other objects is concentration. Removing all doubts through questions and discussions on the points of suspicion is wisdom. Kun-bzang bla-ma'i zhal-lung, Karma Dharma Raktra Centre, Rumtek. pp. 12a1-6.
26. Miscellaneous behaviours to be maintained while receiving teachings are the abandonment of all sorts of ill-behaviour and bad manners that are explained in the Discipline sutra and Jataka tales.

27. These are the gods of: 1. the Family of Four Great Kings (rgyal-chen rigs-bzhi/caturmahārājakāyika) 2. the Heaven of Thirty Three (sum-cu tza-gsum/trāyatriṃśā) 3. Without Combat (’thab-bral/yāmā) 4. the Joyous Heaven (dga’a-ldan/ tushita) 5. Enjoying Emanation (’phrul-dga’a/nirmāṇarati) 6. Controlling Others’ Emanations (gzhan-’phrul dbang-byed/paramanīrmitavaśavartin).

28. The seventeen states of gods within the form realm are: 1. the Brahma Type (tshang-ris/brahmakāyika) 2. the Brahma Attendants (tsang-pa mdun-na-mdun/brahmapurohita) 3. the Great Brahma (tsang-chen/mahābrahmana) the three of the fist concentration state. 4. the Little Light- (’od-chung/parittabha) 5. the Limitless Light (tsgad-med ’od/apramanabha) 6. the Bright Light (’od-gsal/abhasavara) the three of the second concentration state. 7. the Little Virtue (dge-chung/subakṛṣṇa) - the three of the third concentration state. 10. the Cloudless (sprin-med/anabhakta) 11. those Born from Merit (bsod-nams-skyes/punyaprasava) 12. the Great Fruit (’bras-bu-che/vr̥hatphala) 13. the Not Great (mi-che-ba/avrha) 14. those Without Pain (mi-gdung-ba/atapas) 15. The Excellent Appearance/ sudarsa 16. The Great Seer (shin-tum-thong/ ’sudarśana) 17. the Below-none (’og-min/akāśam) - the five pure states. Also see Leah Zahler, Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism, Wisdom publications, 1983.

29. The states of the formless realms are: 1. the Limitless Space (nam-mkha’a mtha’-a-yas/akāśānta) 2. the Limitless Consciousness (rnam-shes mtha’-a-yas/vijñānānta) 3. the Nothingness (ci-yang-mchog/akāśa) For detail see ibid.

30. See Deer Park, Kalacakra Initiation, Madison, Wisconsin. 1981. pp. 74-75. Also see Geshe Ngawang Dhargye, Kalacakra Tantra, Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala, 1985 and Dalai Lama & Jefferey Hopkins, Kalacakra Tantra, Rites of
31. They were - Mahākasyapa (od-srung), Prize Ānanda (kun-dga’-a-bo), Śānavāsa (sha-na’i gos-can), Upagupta (nyer-sbas), Dhitika (rdhīh-rdhīh-ka), Kriśna (nag-po) and Mahā-sudarśana (legs-mthong chen-po).

32. The six Indian pandits, also called the Six Ornaments, were - Aryadeva (’phags-pa lha), Vasubandhu (dbyig-gnyen), Dignaga (phyogs-glang), Dharmakirti (chos-grags), Gunaprabha (yon-ten’od) and Sakyaprabha (shakya-’od), Nāgārjuna (klu-sgrub) and Asanga (thogs-med) are the two supreme masters known as the Two Excellences.


39. For information on how the existence of rebirth is established read the Necklace of Good Fortune by Geshe Lamrim. Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala. 1984.


41. See Kun-bzang bla-mai zhal-lung, Karma Dharmacakra Centre, Rumtek, pp.56a2-56b3.


43. I assume the original source of this story is again, what we find in Kun-bzang bla-mai zhal-lung, Karma Dharmacakra Centre, Rumtek, pp. 57b6-58a2.


45. This sutra has been reprinted from Ratnakuta sutra (dKon-brtzegs-kyi-mdo) by Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, Dharamsala. 1985.


47. See Leah Zahler, Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism, Wisdom Publications. 1983.

48. The term used in this context is simply - compositional suffering ('du-byed kyi sdug-bsngal), thus referring to all things we consider as pleasurable, which seemingly do not appear to us as sufferings, but in reality, are the sole cause of sufferings. For instance, food, clothes, dwellings, and wealth or offering of a feast etc., are all caused by non-virtues. All these activities are mere exploitation of non-virtues, the result of which is only miseries. Kun-bzang bla-mai zhal-lung, Karma Dharmacakra Centre, Rumtek. pp. 63b5-65b3.

49. Also see ibid.

50. The entire physio-psycho spectrum of a being is known as the aggregates, which are of five types, the aggregate of form, feeling, perception, compositional and consciousness.

51. For actual meditation on Vajrasattva, you will require practical teachings on the methods of this meditation from a qualified master who has the lineage in order that the meditation becomes effective and powerful. Read Mahayana Purification, Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala. 1980.
52. These are the force of object of reliance, e.g. a Buddha, the force of regret over your past misdeeds, the force of pledge vowing never to commit any non-virtues again, and the force of applying antidotes, e.g. through meditation on the faults of generating anger and others. For detail read *Mahayana Purification*, Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala. 1980.


54. For information on the number of precepts for a full day's vow holder, lay person's vows, novice monks and nuns, fully ordained monk, holder of Bodhisattva and tantric vows refer notes number 16, 17, 18 and 19 respectively.

55. See note number 28 above.

56. See note number 29 above.

57. See note number 27 above.


59. A Superior (Arya) is a practitioner who is on the third of the five paths or has already crossed it. Such a person is possessed with the wisdom understanding emptiness.


61. For a brief and concise knowledge of the three Kayas or the four Kayas, their qualities and etc. see Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, *Opening the Mind and Generating a Good Heart*, translated by Tsepak Rigzin and Jeremy Russell, Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala. 1985. pp. 64-74.

62. Since seeking refuge in the Three Jewels is the gateway to becoming a Buddhist, it is advised that any person wishing to be a Buddhist should formerly receive the refuge practice from a
qualified master. This is a simple ceremony which also entails explanation of the refuge precepts. Those interested in knowing what are these may refer to *The Tibetan Tradition of Mental Development*, by Geshe Ngawang Dhargye, Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala. 1974.
PART III

A GUYIDE TO THE NYINGMA LAMRIM
AN ORAL TRANSMISSION OF THE GURU
SAMANTABHADRA
(kun-bzang bla-ma'i zhal-lung)

Preliminary Practices of the Dzogpa Chenpo
Longchen Nyingtik teachings

by

Patrul Jigmed Choekyi Wangpo (1808-1887)
Introduction:
  Words of obeisance
  Promise to compose

This Lamrim has Three Principal Topics:
1. The common outer preliminaries
2. The uncommon inner preliminaries
3. The teachings on the transference of consciousness, a speedy path that compliments the main practice

The Common Outer Preliminaries has Six:
1. Difficulty of finding (a rebirth of) pleasures and endowments
2. Death and impermanence of this life
3. Faults of cyclic existence (samsara)
4. Law of cause and effect
5. Benefits of the state of liberation
6. Cultivation of a spiritual master (Guru)

Difficulty of finding pleasures and endowments has two:
1. How to listen to a teaching
2. List of topics concerned

How to listen to a teaching has two:
 a. Motivation
 b. Behaviours

Motivation has two:
 a. The extensive thoughts concerning motivation of the mind of enlightenment
 b. The extensive methods concerning motivation of the secret mantra

Behaviours has two:
 a. Behaviours to be abandoned
b. Behaviours to be cultivated

**Behaviours to be abandoned has three:**

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**Behaviours to be cultivated has three:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Four attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Six perfections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Miscellaneous other behaviours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of topics concerning (the difficulty of finding leisures and endowments) has four:**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Contemplating the nature of the leisures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Contemplating the endowments as their qualifying factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Contemplating the difficulty of finding these by means of examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Contemplating the above by means of numbers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Death and impermanence has seven:**

1. Meditation on impermanence considering the external world as the vessel | 28a5-29b1 |
2. Meditation on impermanence considering the inhabitants as beings living in it | 29b1-31a1 |
3. Meditation on impermanence considering the holy beings | 31a1-32a4 |
4. Meditation on impermanence considering the lord of sentient beings (Lord Buddha) | 32a4-33b1 |
5. Meditation on impermanence considering numerous examples and their meanings | 33b1-41a1 |
6. Meditation on impermanence considering the uncertainty of the conditions of death | 41a1-42a3 |
7. Meditation on impermanence considering our strong aspiration | 42a3-46a3 |
Faults of cyclic existence has two:

1. Contemplating the sufferings of the cyclic existence in general
2. Contemplating the sufferings of the six types of beings in particular

Contemplating the sufferings of the six types of beings in particular has six:

1. Eighteen hells are:
   a. Eight hot hells
   b. Sixteen neighbouring hells
   c. Eight cold hells
   d. Occasional hells

2. Contemplating the sufferings of the hungry ghosts has two:
   a. Hungry ghosts living in the oceans
   b. Hungry ghosts living in the space

Hungry ghosts living in the oceans has two:
   a. Those with external obstructions
   b. Those with internal obstructions
   c. Those with both the obstructions

3. Contemplating the sufferings of the animals has two:
   a. Those living in the oceans
   b. Those scattered throughout

4. Contemplating the sufferings of the human beings has six:
   a. Three great sufferings
   b. Sufferings of the four great torrents of birth, ageing, sickness and death
   c. Suffering of fear of meeting with malignant enemies
d. Suffering of fear of separation from beloved friends 71a4-73a3

e. Suffering of meeting with the undesired conditions 73b5-75b5

f. Suffering of not meeting with the desired 73a3-73b5

Three great sufferings are:

a. Suffering of change 63a5-63b3
b. Suffering of suffering 63b3-63b5
c. Pervasive suffering 63b5-65b3

Four great torrents of sufferings of birth, ageing, sickness and death are:

a. Suffering of birth 65b3-66b5
b. Suffering of ageing 66b5-68b1
c. Suffering of sickness 68b1-69a5
d. Suffering of death 69a5-70a5

5. Sufferings of the demi-gods 75b5-76b4
6. Sufferings of the gods 76b4-83a2

Law of cause and effect has three:

1. Unwholesome actions to be abandoned 83a4-100a4
2. Wholesome actions to be cultivated 100a4-101b5
3. Explaining how all (composite things?) are in the nature of karma 101b5-114a6

Unwholesome actions to be abandoned has ten:

a. Taking life 83b3-86b3
b. Taking what is not given 86b3-88b6
   1) taking by force 86b3-86b5
   2) taking stealthily 86b5-86b6
   3) taking by treachery 86b6-87a1
c. Sexual misconduct 88b6-89a6
d. Lying 89a6-90a1
   1) common lie 89a6-89b1
2) big lie 89b1-89b2
3) lying of suprahuman dharma 89b2-89b3
e. Slander 90a1-90a6
  1) manifest slander 90a2-90a3
  2) hidden slander 90a3-90a4
f. Harsh words 90a6-90b3
g. Idle gossip 90b3-91b3
h. Covetousness 91b4-91b5
i. Harmful intent 91b5-92a1
j. Wrong view 92a1-93b3

_Fruits of the ten unwholesome actions are:_
a. Ripened fruit 93b4-93b6
b. Fruits that correspond to their cause 93b6-100a4
  1) fruits that correspond to their action 94a2-94b1
  2) fruits that correspond to their experience 94b2-99b3
  3) environmental fruits 99b3-100a3
  4) fruits produced by persons (multiplying karma) 100a3-100a4

_Fruits of the ten wholesome actions to be cultivated are:_
a. Ripened fruits 101a6-101a6
b. Fruits that correspond to their cause 101a6-101b5
  1) fruits that correspond to their action 101a6-101b1
  2) fruits that correspond to their experience 101b1-101b3
  3) environmental fruits 101b3-101b4
  4) fruits produced by persons (multiplying karma) 101b4-101b5

Explaining how all (compositional things) are in the nature of karma 101b5-114ab

_Benefits of the state of liberation and cultivation of a spiritual master (Guru)_ 114a6-143a6
1. how to examine a spiritual master at the beginning 115b1-120a6
2. how to cultivate a spiritual master in the middle 120a2-125b3
3. how to train oneself according to the words of the master in the end 125b3-143a6

This concludes the common outer preliminaries.

The Uncommon Inner Preliminaries has Six:
1. Taking refuge which is the foundation of all paths 143b3-163a3
2. Generation the mind of enlightenment into greater vehicle 163a3-227a4
3. Meditation on Vajrasattva in order to purify negativities that acts as obstructions 227a4-241b3
4. Making mandala offering as a favourable condition accumulating merits 241b3-252a4
5. The Yogi mendicant's accumulation of merit for severing the four evils simultaneously 252a5-259b5
6. Guru yoga as a means for perfecting the wisdom of realization within oneself 259b5-290a4

Taking refuge which is the foundation of all paths have three:
1. Divisions of the refuge 143b4-148b6
2. Mode of seeking refuge 148b6-154a1
3. Benefits and precepts of refuge 154a1-163a6

The gateway to taking refuge which is faith has three:
a. pure faith 143b6-144a2
b. longing faith 144a2-144a3
c. convictional faith 144a4-144b1
This refuge with faith also has three from the point of view of what motivates it:

a. refuge of the person of small scope  

b. refuge of the person of middling scope  
c. refuge of the person of great scope  

Mode of seeking refuge has five:

a. mode of seeking refuge according to the common greater vehicle  
b. mode of seeking refuge according to the uncommon secret mantra vehicle in general  
c. mode of seeking refuge according to the exalted methods of vajra vehicle  
d. mode of seeking refuge according to the ultimate infallible vajra  
e. visualization of the refuge field of merit  

Precepts and benefits of the refuge:
There are three precepts:

a. three to be abandoned  
b. three to be cultivated  
c. three associated precepts  

The benefits  

Generating supreme mind of enlightenment, which is the foundation of the greater vehicle (path) has three:

1. mind training on the four immeasurable (thoughts)  
2. generating mind of the enlightenment  
3. taking precepts of the aspiring and engaging mind of enlightenment  

Mind training on the four immeasurable (thoughts)

a. equanimity  
b. loving kindness
c. compassion 169a4-181b3
d. joy 181b4-183b4

Actual mind of enlightenment according to the force of intention has three:

a. mind of enlightenment of great desire 186b2-187a3
b. mind of enlightenment like a ferryman 187a3-187a4
c. mind of enlightenment like a shepherd 187a4-187a5

Mind of enlightenment according to the level of attainment has four:

a. mind of enlightenment preoccupied by faith 187a5-187a6
b. mind of enlightenment of pure resolute intention 187a6-187a6
c. mind of enlightenment which is fully ripened 187a6-187a6
d. mind of enlightenment free of obscurations 187a6-187b1

Mind of enlightenment according to the nature has two:

a. conventional mind of enlightenment 187b1-188a2
b. ultimate mind of enlightenment 188a2-188a4

Conventional mind of enlightenment has two:

1) aspiring mind of enlightenment 187b2-187b5
2) engaging mind of enlightenment 187b5-188a1

Precepts of mind of enlightenment has two:

a. precepts of the aspiring mind of enlightenment concerning meditation on equalising self and others, exchanging self with others and cherishing others more than oneself 190b2-202b1
b. precepts of the engaging mind of enlightenment concerning the practise of
the six perfection

*Precepts of the aspiring mind of enlightenment has three:*

a. meditation on the mind of enlightenment equalising self with others

b. meditation on the mind of enlightenment exchanging self with others

c. meditation on the mind of enlightenment cherishing others more than self

*Precepts of the engaging mind of enlightenment concerning the six perfections:*

a. perfection of generosity

b. perfection of morality

c. perfection of patience

d. perfection of efforts

e. perfection of concentration

f. perfection of wisdom

*Perfection of generosity has three:*

a. giving of material help

b. giving of dharma

c. giving of protection from fear

*Giving of material help has three:*

1) giving

2) great giving

3) tremendous giving

*Perfection of morality has three:*

a. morality of abstention from negative conducts

b. morality of accumulating wholesome dharma

c. morality of helping other sentient beings
Perfection of patience has three:
   a. patience of accepting harms caused by others 207b3-209a3
   b. patience of accepting hardships for the purpose of dharma 209a3-211a2
   c. patience of not being afraid of the profound meaning 211a2-211b6

Perfection of effort has three:
   a. armour like effort 211a6-212b1
   b. effort of application 212b1-213a3
   c. insatiable effort 213a3-214b1

Perfection of concentration has three:
   a. concentration like a child’s obsession 217a4-217a5
   b. concentration fully discriminaing the meaning 217a5-217a6
   c. concentration of a Tathagata 217a6-217b1

Perfection of wisdom has three:
   a. wisdom of hearing 217b4-217b5
   b. wisdom of contemplation 217b5-218a2
   c. wisdom of meditation 218a2-218b2
   (Concluding Summary) 218b2-227a4

Meditation on Guru Vajrasattva for purification of negativities:
   Four forces of antidotes:
   a. force of object (of refuge) 288b1-229a1
   b. force of regret over the misdeeds commited earlier 229a1-229a4
   c. force of restrain (pledge) 229a4-229b1
   d. force of applying antidotes 229b1-230a2

   Actual meditation on Vajrasattva 230a2-241b3

Making mandala offering for the accumulation of
merits
1. making mandala offering of practice according to this tradition 242b6-245a3
2. making mandala offering of offering 245a3-246a3
3. material for mandala offering 242b3-242b6

*Mandala offering of practice has three:*

a. mandala offering of the five heaps 242b6-243b6
b. mandala offering of the thirty-seven heaps 243b6-245a3
c. mandala offering of the three kayas according to this tradition:
   1) the common mandala offering of Nirmanakaya 245a3-245b5
   2) the uncommon mandala offering of Sambhogakaya 245b5-246a1
   c. the special mandala offering Dharmakaya 246a1-246a3
      (Related Instructions) 246a3-252a4

*The yogi mendicant's accumulation of merits for uprooting the four evil forces* 252a4-260b5

*Guru yoga as the source of blessings and the lasting means amongst all ways in order to produce the wisdom of realization within oneself* 260b5-290a4

*How to practice Guru Yoga has three:*

a. visualization of the merit field 263a6-266a5
b. offering of the seven limbed practices 266a5-276a3
c. making fervent prayers 276a3-279a4

A brief religious history of Buddhism with primary emphasis on the three inner yoga tantras according to the Ancient Tradition 279a4-290a4

a. Buddha's intention lineage 279a6-280a3
b. Vidhyadhara's symbol lineage
   mahayoga tantra
   annuyoga tantra
   atiyoga tantra

c. humans' whispered lineage

The Teachings on the Transference of Consciousness:
A Speedy Path as Compliment to the Main Practice

The practice of meditation on the transference of
consciousness that compliments the actual
practices known as the teachings on transference
of consciousness without meditation

Generally, there are five types of consciousness
transference practices:
1. that of the Dharmakaya sealed by view for
   the advanced practitioners
2. that of the Sambhogakaya of the union of
   the generation and completion stage for
   the intermediate practitioners
3. that of the Nirmanakaya of the immeasurable
   compassion for beginners
4. that of the triple-recognition for the
   ordinary
5. that of the iron-hook like compassion for
   guiding those at death

The teachings on the consciousness transference
concerned here is that of the triple-recognition,
also called the sublime ejection of consciousness
(rnam-shes bla-ma'i 'pho-ba)

Conclusion
Dedication
The guide has been translated and presented in its form by consulting a xylograph copy published by His Holiness the late Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa's center (kar-ma'i chos-sgar) Sikkim.
PART IV

A GUIDE TO THE NYINGMA LAMRIM

(Tibetan Text)
བོད་དོན་དུས་ཀྱི་ལས་དོན་དུས་ཀྱི་དགུ་སྤྱི་སྤྱོད་ཐོབ་པས་མེད།

མཆོད་པའི་གཏན། ༡༥༢—༣༥༦

ལེགས་པའི་བཅོད། ༣༧༢—༣༨༣
དབེ་བོ་སྤྱོད

1. དབེ་བོ་སྤྱོད་བྲག་པར་དགུ་བ་
2. དབེ་བོ་སྤྱོད་དོན་དཀར
3. དབེ་བོ་སྤྱོད་གྲོ་དགུ

1. དབེ་བོ་སྤྱོད་བྲག་པར་དགུ་བ་
2. དབེ་བོ་སྤྱོད་དོན་དཀར
3. དབེ་བོ་སྤྱོད་གྲོ་དགུ

1. ཏོ་བོ་གཞོན་པ་
2. ཏོ་བོ་གཞོན་པ་
3. རུ་མོ་མོ་བཤད།

4. མོ་ཐབས་མོ་མོ་བཤད།

5. མོ་ཐབས་མོ་མོ་བཤད།

2. གལ་འཇིག་ཚོགས་པ།

3. གལ་འཇིག་ཚོགས་པ།

4. གལ་འཇིག་ཚོགས་པ།

2. རུ་མོ་མོ་བཤད།

3. རུ་མོ་མོ་བཤད།

4. རུ་མོ་མོ་བཤད།

2. འབྲུ་བུ་བཤད།

3. འབྲུ་བུ་བཤད།

4. འབྲུ་བུ་བཤད།

2. རུ་མོ་མོ་བཤད།

3. རུ་མོ་མོ་བཤད།

4. རུ་མོ་མོ་བཤད།
218

བོད་ཀྱི་དོན་དཔལ་སྤྲོད་པ
1 བོད་དག་བསལ་བ
2 སོགས་པོ་ཚར་དབང་པ་
3 རྡོ་དྲུང་གཤི་འབུམ་བསལ་བ
4 གཙན་པོ་དྲུག་པ
5 སྐབས་ཀྱི་ཤུ་བྱ་བསལ་བ

ཁོ་ཁྲིམས་བཟོ་བཟོ་བཟོ་བཟོ་བཟོ་
བོད་དུགོར་སྱིད་དུར་ལྟོག་བསྒོད་པའི་ཐོས་

1. བོད་དུགོར་སྲུང་བསྒོད་པའི་ཐོས་
   ཐོས་པ།

2. རྣམ་སྐྱོང་འཛིན་ཐོས་པའི་སྐུ་
   དུས་པ།

3. རྣམ་སྐྱོང་འཛིན་ཐོས་པའི་སྐུ་
   དུས་པ།

4. རྩོམ་པ་

5. རྩོམ་པ་

6. རྩོམ་པ་

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73. རྩོམ་པ་

74. རྩོམ་པ་

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76. རྩོམ་པ་

77. རྩོམ་པ་

78. རྩོམ་པ་

79. རྩོམ་པ་

80. རྩོམ་པ་

81. རྩོམ་པ་

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83. རྩོམ་པ་

84. རྩོམ་པ་

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93. རྩོམ་པ་

94. རྩོམ་པ་

95. རྩོམ་པ་

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97. རྩོམ་པ་

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99. རྩོམ་པ་

100. རྩོམ་པ་
བོད་ཡིག

1. བོད་ཡིག་དཔེར་བ། ༢༠༥༤—༢༠༥༤
2. ཕེས་པ་བཤད་བ། ༢༠༥༥—༢༠༥༥
3. མདོད། ༢༠༥༥—༢༠༥༥

མི་ཕུག་བུམ་

1. ལྟེར་ལུགས་བུམ་ཅུན་གཏིང་། ༢༠༥༦—༢༠༥༦
2. སྐྱེར་དྲུག་ཅུན་གཏིང་། ལྷག་པོ་—༢༠༥༧
3. དབྱ་མཆི་དྲུག་ཅུན་གཏིང་། སྤོས་པ་—༢༠༥༧
4. བོད་དུ་ལུགས་བུམ་ཅུན་གཏིང་། སྤོས་པ་—༢༠༥༨
5. སྐྱེར་དྲུག་ཅུན་གཏིང་། སྤོས་པ་—༢༠༥༨
6. བོད་དུ་ལུགས་བུམ་ཅུན་གཏིང་། སྤོས་པ་—༢༠༥༨
ཐོག་པའི་ཐོན་པོའི་ཤིང་པོའི་ཐམས་ཅད་།

1. གཙུག་པའི་ཐོན་པོའི་ཤིང་པོ
   ༡༤༥༢—༡༤༤༡

2. གཙུག་པའི་ཐོན་པོའི་ཤིང་པོ
   ༡༤༤༡—༡༤༣༠

3. གཙུག་པའི་ཐོན་པོའི་ཤིང་པོ
   ༡༤༣༠—༡༤༢༩

4. གཙུག་པའི་ཐོན་པོའི་ཤིང་པོ
   ༡༤༢༩—༡༤༢༨

5. གཙུག་པའི་ཐོན་པོའི་ཤིང་པོ
   ༡༤༢༨—༡༤༢༧

6. གཙུག་པའི་ཐོན་པོའི་ཤིང་པོ
   ༡༤༢༧—༡༤༢༦

དབྱེ་བར་བྱས་ཤིང་ཤིས་ཐོག་པའི་
ཤིང་པོ།

༩༠༤༧—༩༠༤༩

བོད་དུ་སུམ་ཅུང་ད་ཅོང་ཤིང་
དབྱེ་བར་བྱས་ཤིང་པོ།

༩༠༤༩—༩༠༤༨

དབྱེ་བར་བྱས་ཤིང་ཤིས་ཐོག་པའི་
བོད་དུ་སུམ་ཅུང་ད་ཅོང་

༩༠༤༨—༩༠༤༧

བོད་དུ་སུམ་ཅུང་ད་ཅོང་

༩༠༤༧—༩༠༤༦

དབྱེ་བར་བྱས་ཤིང་ཤིས་ཐོག་པའི་

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བོད་དུ་ད་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་

1 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2076—2076

2 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2076—2076

3 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2076—2076

4 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2076—2076

5 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2076—2076

6 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2076—2076

བོད་དུ་དཔོན་འཕེལ་བའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2076—2076

གཙུག་གཏུགས་ད་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་བསྐོར་

1 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2267—2307

2 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2307—2347

3 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2347—2387

4 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2387—2427

5 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2427—2467

6 ཡུགས་དུ་མཐུན་པའི་ཐོབ་དཔོན་ 2467—2507
1. མཐོང་ཁི་ཀྱི་ད་ཀུན་བོ་བཞི་
   རིགས་པའི་དོན།
   ༦༦༧༧༣—༦༦༧༥༣

2. འོག་མོ་ཀྱི་གསེར་ཤིན་སྤྱོད་པའི་
   རིགས་པའི་ཤིས་བྲིས།
   ༦༦༧༥༣—༦༦༧༧༣

3. རྟོགས་ཀྱི་ཆོས་ལོག་བཞི་
   བརྡ་བྱུ།
   ༦༦༧༦༢—༦༦༧༣༢

4. རྗེས་པ་དོན་དུ་དུ་མུ་འདུན་
   རུ་ལུ་སྨི་ཆིགས་བཞི་
   མཐོ་བྱ།
   ༦༦༧༣༥—༦༦༧༢༢

5. སྨྲ་ཐོས་མི་དུས་དུས་མུ་འདུན་
   རུ་ལུ་སྨི་ཆིགས་བཞི་
   མཐོ་བྱ།
   ༦༦༧༢༢—༦༦༧༥༢

6. སྨ་དུས་མི་དུས་མུ་འདུན་
   རུ་ལུ་སྨི་ཆིགས་བཞི་
   མཐོ་བྱ།
   ༦༦༧༥༢—༦༦༧༦༢

གནས་ནས་ཅིག་ཐུབ་བོ་འཁོར་བྱ།

འདི་བཞི་དཔག་དོན།

1. སྐུ་བུ་བཐོད་པའི་
   ༥༨༥༥༢—༥༨༥༦༢

2. སྐུ་བུ་བཐོད་པའི་
   ༥༨༥༦༢—༥༨༥༧༡

3. བདོ་ཐོས་དུས་དུས་མུ་འདུན་
   རུ་ལུ་སྨི་ཆིགས་བཞི།
   ༥༨༥༧༡—༥༨༥༨༡

སྐུ་བུ་བཐོད་པའི་དཔག་དོན་ལས་དོན།

1. སྐུ་བུ་བཐོད་པའི་
   ༥༨༥༨༡—༥༨༥༩༡

2. སྐུ་བུ་བཐོད་པའི་
   ༥༨༥༩༡—༥༨༥༠༡
3. རིང་ཐུན་པའི་དཔེ་བྲག

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བོད་དི་དིང་པོ་སྐབས་ལས་སུ།

བོད་བོ་སོགས་སློངས།

1. བོད་དི་དིང་པོ་སྐབས་ལས་སུ། ༡༦༣༣–༡༦༥༣
2. བོད་དི་དིང་པོ་སྐབས་ལས་སུ། ༡༦༥༣–༡༦༨༣
3. བོད་དི་དིང་པོ་སྐབས་ལས་སུ། ༡༦༨༣–༡༦༠༤

ཆོས་དི་དིང་པོ་སྐབས་ལས་སུ།

1. མདོ་ཤི་ཀུན་ངོ་། ༡༦༢༥–༡༦༩༤
2. མདོ་ཤི་ཀུན་ངོ་། ༡༦༩༤–༡༦༢༩
3. མདོ་ཤི་ཀུན་ངོ་། ༡༦༢༩–༡༦༩༣
4. མདོ་ཤི་ཀུན་ངོ་། ༡༦༩༣–༡༦༢༣

སོགས་གཉིས་དཔེ་ལས།

བོད་དི་དིང་པོ་སྐབས་ལས་སུ།
1. སིམས་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ།
2. འསུམ་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ།
3. གཉིས་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ།

སྣམས་བྲལ་གླིང་།
1. སིམས་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ།
2. འསུམ་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ།
3. གཉིས་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ།

སིམས་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ་དང་།
1. རབ་ཏུ་སིམས་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ།
2. སྐྱེས་དབང་པོ་སིམས་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ།

སྣམས་བྲལ་གླིང་།
1. སིམས་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ།
2. འསུམ་པའི་ཕུན་ཐོབ།
གུང་ཁུང་ཁིམ་པཐུང་པ།
དངོས་པོས་སོང་གི་དགེ་བཞིན་
1 དབངས་ཁུང་མིང་། རྩ་བུ—ཉུབ་བོ
2 དབངས་ཁུང་མིང་། ཉུབ་བོ—ཉུབ་བོ

གུང་ཁུང་ཁིམ་པཐུང་པོའི་བོད་
དངོས་པོས་སོང་གི་དགེ་བཞིན་
1 དབངས་ཁུང་མིང་། རྩ་བུ—ཉུབ་བོ

གུང་ཁུང་ཁིམ་པཐུང་པོའི་བོད་
དངོས་པོས་སོང་གི་དགེ་བཞིན་
1 དབངས་ཁུང་མིང་། རྩ་བུ—ཉུབ་བོ
2 དབངས་ཁུང་མིང་། ཉུབ་བོ—ཉུབ་བོ
3 དབངས་ཁུང་མིང་། ཉུབ་བོ—ཉུབ་བོ
4 དབངས་ཁུང་མིང་། ཉུབ་བོ—ཉུབ་བོ

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གིས་པའི་དཔོན་དུས་པ་པ་དང་པོ་བཤད་པ་ཁྲིམས། 3067—3068
3 དགུན་པའི་དཔོན་དུས་པ་ཁྲིམས། 3069—3070
4 གཞིས་དབྱངས་དཔོན་དུས་པ་ཁྲིམས། 3071—3072

ཕིིུ་པའི་དཔོན་དུས་པ་པ་དང་པོ་བཤད་པ་ཁྲིམས།
1 གནོད་ཤིང་ཤེས་པ་བོད་པའི་ཕིིུ་པ། 3073—3074
2 ཕོང་བོི་དབྱངས་དཔོན་དུས་པ་ཕིིུ་པ། 3075—3076
3 བོད་པ་དབྱངས་དཔོན་དུས་པ་ཕིིུ་པ། 3077—3078

དགེ་བོ་བསུམ་ཤིི་འཛིན་པ་དུས་པ་པ་དང་པོ་བཤད་པ་ཁྲིམས།
1 གེ་བོའི་དཀོན་ཐང་། 3079—3080
2 ན་མི་དཀོན་ཐང་། 3081—3082
3 མི་དཀོན་ཐང་། 3083—3084
བསམ་པར་འཛིན་པར་འདུས་པའི་བསུམ་སྤྱོད།

1. མིན་པའི་ཐུབ་མོ།
   བསམ་པར་1885–1963

2. རྒྱན་པར་འབྲིང་པ།
   བསམ་པར་1964–1969

3. རྒྱན་orman་དགེ་པ།
   བསམ་པར་1969–1977

4. འིཊ་ཕེན་པོ་དྲུག་པོ་དགེ་པ།
   བསམ་པར་1977–1985

ཐུན་རབ་སྟོན་པའི་དོན་ཐིག་ལས་བརྟན་པོ་

1. རིག་གཉིས་ཐོབ་པ།
   བསམ་པར་1965–1969

2. བསམ་པར་འཁོར་རིག་གཉིས་པ།
   བསམ་པར་1969–1980

3. ཚོང་རྒྱ་ལོག་པོ་དགེ་པ།
   བསམ་པར་1980–1985

4. འིཊ་ཕེན་པོ་དྲུག་པོ་དགེ་པ།
   བསམ་པར་1985–1990

མིག་པ་འགོད་མི་ཞེས་པའི་བཞི་བཞིར།

སྤིང་བཞིན།

1. རིག་གཉིས་ཐོབ་པ།
   བསམ་པར་1965–1969

2. ཚོང་རྒྱ་ལོག་པོ་དགེ་པ།
   བསམ་པར་1969–1980

3. འིཊ་ཕེན་པོ་དྲུག་པོ་དགེ་པ།
   བསམ་པར་1980–1985

4. འིཊ་ཕེན་པོ་དྲུག་པོ་དགེ་པ་བོད།
   བསམ་པར་1985–1990
ང་ཚིགས་བཙམ་ཡིག་ལེ་བོ་དང་།

ཚིགས་བཙམ་ཡིག་ལེ་བོ་

1. སངས་སི་ད་སུགས་དུ་བུ་ཀུན་པོ་
   སློབ་བོ་
   བོད་པ་

2. མཆོད་དུ་པོ་ཤི་མོ་ལྡན་པ་
   བོད་པ་

མི་གཉིས་

བསྟན་སི་མི་ཤི་མོ་ལྡན་པ་

1. སླེད་ཙུལ་བོ་ཤི་མོ་ལྡན་པ་
   རྒྱུན་
   བོད་པ་

2. སླེད་ཙུལ་ཤི་མོ་ལྡན་པ་
   རྒྱུན་
   བོད་པ་

3. སླེད་ཙུལ་ཤི་མོ་ལྡན་པ་
   རྒྱུན་
   བོད་པ་

བསྟན་སི་མི་ཤི་མོ་ལྡན་པ་

སྲུང་གཤིས་ཐོད་དེ་ཐོད་ལ་

སྲུང་གཤིས་ཐོད་དེ་ཐོད་ལ་

བོད་པ་

233
3. རིགས་དང་པོ་དྲི་བུ་བཞི་

3. ཡིགས་དང་པོ་ཞི་བུ་བཞི

3. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

2. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

3. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

2. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

3. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

2. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

3. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

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3. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

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2. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

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2. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

3. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

2. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

3. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

2. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི

3. རྒྱལ་མཚན་གཙུག་བུ་བཞི
๐ ཕ་མ་པ་དང་།ཏེས་གསུམ་བསྐད་

ིར།།།

༡ རོ་ེད་སྐད་ལྡེན་བྲུག་

གོས་སྲིད་བྱེད།

༢ ཉེང་དེ་རིང་གུ་བཤད་

ཀྲེད་བྱེད།

༣ དེ་རིང་གུའི་བཤད་

ཀྲེད་བྱེད།

༤ ནང་བཟུང་

༢༠༠༨—༢༠༣༨

༥ མང་མ་

༢༠༠༨—༢༠༣༨

༦ མང་མ་

༢༠༠༨—༢༠༣༨

༧ མང་མ་

༢༠༠༨—༢༠༣༨

༨ མང་མ་

༢༠༠༨—༢༠༣༨

༩ མང་མ་

༢༠༠༨—༢༠༣༨

༡༠ མང་མ་

༢༠༠༨—༢༠༣༨

༡༡ མང་མ་

༢༠༠༨—༢༠༣༨
Venerable Garje Khamtrul Jamyang Dhondup Rinpoche is a well-known visionary Dzog-chen master of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Born in 1927, he was recognized as the incarnation of the 3rd Khamtrul Gyurmed Trinley Namgyal Rinpoche at the age of eight and received intensive training in sutra, tantra, ka-ma, ter-ma, medicine, astrology, arts and Dzog-chen meditation. After coming into exile, Rinpoche served the Tibetan community in various capacities and retired as the General Secretary of the Council for Cultural and Religious Affairs of the Tibetan Government-in-exile, 1986. Since then Rinpoche has travelled widely to many foreign countries and is presently engaged in giving teachings on various aspects of Tibetan Buddhism.

THE JEWEL LADDER

The Jewel Ladder (Rin-chen them-skas) is a short and comprehensive Nyingma Lamrim for beginners by Minling Terchen Gyurme Dorjee (1643–1714), commonly known as Terdak Lingpa, one of the foremost early master-scholars of Tibet, who was both a teacher and disciple of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama.

The text introduces us to the preliminaries of the Buddhist practice required for higher spiritual development such as the four basic ways of concentrating one’s mind on the Dharma and the Four Noble Truths.

This commentary by Khamtrul Rinpoche given in simple and lucid language unravels the gist of Rin-chen them-skas. Appended at the end of the book is a guide to the voluminous Nyingma Lamrim (kun-bzang bla-ma’i zhal-lung).

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