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TEACHINGS BY HIS HOLINESS THE 14TH DALAI LAMA ON:

THE MIDDLE STAGES OF MEDITATION

by Acharya Kamalashila,

THE THIRTY-SEVEN PRACTICES OF BODHISATTVAS

by Ngulchu Thogme Zangpo,

THE LAMP FOR THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

by Lama Atisha Dipamkarashrijnana

Day 3, October 17, 2002

In the beginning, with regard to the process of generation of bodhicitta, Lord Maitreya says:

One that stops the path to negative existence,
One that shows the path to higher state of happiness,
And one that destroys old age and death;
I pay homage to the bodhicitta!

As is outlined in this verse by Maitreya, if we possess a wish to benefit other sentient beings, if we possess the altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, based on which we cherish the well-being of other sentient beings more than ourselves, then naturally as a byproduct one will stop accumulating the non-meritorious actions, which are responsible for taking birth in the negative states of existence. And when we are able to develop a positive mind like that of bodhicitta, which, we can say, is the ultimate form of beneficial mind, because of generation of such a mind our virtuous practices will naturally increase, and it in this way we will gradually achieve a higher status.

By developing such a bodhicitta, although we voluntarily continue to stay in the cycle of existence in order to be able to benefit all sentient beings, we develop an immense courage. This is cited in the text called *Verses of Guru-Devotion*, or *Guru Puja*:

By developing such a bodhicitta, you develop such a tremendous amount of courage, that even if you were to stay in the hot hell or ceaseless hell-realm for countless eons for the sake of just one sentient being, you will not be discouraged because of the presence of strong compassion.
May I be able to achieve the perfection of endeavor or effort!

As is said in this verse from the *Guru Puja*, when you have developed such a tremendous amount of courage to dedicate yourself to the benefit of other sentient beings, although you have totally given up caring for yourself because of your total dedication for the well-being of other sentient beings, your own personal purposes will be fulfilled as a byproduct. And it is in this context that the great Kadampa

masters in the past said that if you have the bodhicitta, it will do the job of accumulating merit, it will do the job of fulfilling one's own purpose, and it will do the job of fulfilling the purposes of other sentient beings. Thus, one's own purposes will be spontaneously and effortlessly fulfilled as a byproduct.

Therefore it is now our task to ensure that our mind is directed towards such an altruistic mind, such a mind of bodhicitta, and to make our mind totally habituated with it. Even if you are able to develop only a fraction of the quality of this altruistic intention, then, we can say, this is really the start of a happy life, a peaceful life. And for undertaking such a practice, we will never find a better time than today, because today we have obtained this precious human life, we have encountered the precious sacred teachings of the Buddha. Having such a wonderful opportunity and facility at our disposal, it is important to make an endeavor, to make repeated effort and to try to leave as many positive imprints as possible towards developing such an altruistic mind.

In order to develop such an altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, we need to make ourselves familiar with various processes of visualization and objects of focus. Therefore it is important first of all to develop some sense of appreciation towards the development of bodhicitta. One must clearly discern the benefits of generating such a mind. In this way you will be able to develop a wish to acquire or develop bodhicitta. And it is in this way that we should receive this mind of bodhicitta.

Now, in the place where you see the image of the Buddha, on the thangka in front of you, you should visualize not only the photo of the Buddha, but you should visualize the actual presence of the Buddha adorned with his major and minor characteristics and signs. In this way you should imagine the actual presence of Buddha in front of you, as it is said in the text called *Praising the Dependent Arising* by Tsongkhapa: "When I reflect on the excellent speech of the Buddha, and when I reflect on the excellent body of the Buddha endowed with major and minor signs, my heart is filled with delight." In this way you should remember the qualities of the body, speech and mind of the Buddha, and reflect that he is actually present in front of you as an object of refuge, as a witness, in front of whom you are generating this mind of bodhicitta. Around the Buddha imagine the presence of great masters like Nagarjuna.

In the case of Nagarjuna, in the painting here in front he has been depicted with a kind of sleeveless shirt, which is actually wrong, because the costumes and clothes of Nagarjuna should be depicted similar to any other ordinary monk and not in this form. It is a usual tradition that Asanga wears a sleeveless shirt, because he is the son of a king, whereas in the case of other masters like Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and so forth, they should be depicted in the ordinary bhikshu form. And in terms of seniority Nagarjuna's picture should be on the right, however in this particular painting of the 17 Nalanda Scholars, which I have commissioned to draw, I have purposely asked the painter to draw Nagarjuna on the left side, to represent the profound lineage of the philosophical view. However, as I said earlier, I have not asked the painter to

draw Nagarjuna wearing this sleeveless shirt.

So you should visualize these masters in the order written in the *A Prayer to the 17 Great Pandits of the Glorious Nalanda* and similarly you should visualize other great lineage masters, like the vast lineage and the lineage of the blessing. Likewise, in accordance with the sequence of development of Buddha-Dharma, you should recall the great lineage masters who preserved and followed the Pali tradition, and then also reflect on the great masters of China, where the Sanskrit tradition later developed, and then also visualize the presence of great lineage masters of Tibet, where there is a combined practice of the translation of both Pali and Sanskrit. Within the Tibetan tradition or Tibetan school you should visualize all the lineage masters of the ancient school, the Nyingma school, and the lineage masters of the *Path and the Fruit* or the Sakya tradition, and the lineage masters of Kagyü, like Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa, and similarly the lineage masters of the new transmission, Tsongkhapa and his two primary disciples.

In short, you should imagine the complete presence of all the lineage masters right from the Buddha until to your root guru, and see that these masters are present here in front of you as a witness that you are receiving and developing this bodhicitta. And in fact, when we visualize these Buddhas and bodhisattvas in front of us, we are doing so because they all have developed bodhicitta, the mind wishing to benefit other sentient beings. All the qualities that we find in them are the result of practicing bodhicitta.

Similarly, you should also visualize the presence of infinite sentient beings around yourself, seeing that they are like yourself in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering, and develop an intense aspiration and wish that “I will first myself achieve enlightenment and then help all these suffering mother sentient beings to achieve a similar state of enlightenment.” It is in this way that you should develop bodhicitta.

When we talk about generating bodhicitta, it should be generated within the mind of a person. Thus, if at the time of generation of bodhicitta you are not free from certain hindrances – for example if you are discouraged, thinking “How can I generate such a great mind of bodhicitta?” and so forth, likewise if you lack merit – then you will not be able to generate bodhicitta. Or if you are someone who has committed strong negative deeds, this again will act as an obstruction and you will not be able to generate bodhicitta. So in order to purify or eliminate, or at least minimize, the presence of lack of merit and the presence of accumulation of strong negative deeds, here at this point we will reflect on accumulating merit and purifying the negative deeds. Normally this is done by reciting the *Seven-Limb Prayer*, but here there’s not much point in reciting that in Tibetan language, as most of you are listeners to different languages. Therefore, without having to recite the *Seven-Limb Prayer*, I will briefly explain these seven points like paying homage, making offerings and so forth. At that time you should reflect on these points carefully one after the other.

As I said earlier, here again you should reflect clearly on the qualities of body, speech and mind of all these objects of refuge that you have visualized in front of yourself. You should reflect particularly on the qualities of conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta, and then pay homage to them physically, verbally and mentally. Paying physical homage is folding your hands, paying verbal homage means reciting words of praise, and paying mental homage means reflecting on their qualities.

Next come the offerings. In the case of making offerings, there are two types – offerings that you own and that you do not own. In other words, mentally visualize everything wonderful, everything good, everything positive that you find in this world, and mentally visualize that you are offering all of them to the Triratna – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Likewise, you should imagine the positive qualities that you have accumulated physically, verbally and mentally, imagine that all these virtues arise in the form of different offering substances, and then you are offering these substances to the objects of refuge.

The next limb is the practice of confession. There may be many negative deeds that you have committed in this life and which you are able to recall today, and there are may be many other negative deeds which you are unable to recall today, because either you have committed these negative deeds when you were just a very small child, or you might have committed them in many past lives, which you are unable to recall today. However, if we reflect carefully on the state of ordinary unenlightened beings like us, we will find that we are always motivated by afflictive emotions and delusions, and whatever we do somehow leads to accumulating negative deeds. And not only do we commit these negative deeds, but we do so voluntarily and with great rejoicing in our mind, and when we are able to express certain negative deeds, we find some kind of consolation and satisfaction with that.

Therefore it is important to reflect carefully and recall all the negative deeds that you have committed in the past, those you may be able to remember directly as well as those you may not be able to remember directly, but somehow you should think: “I have definitely committed countless negative deeds in the past.” Now in the case of these negative deeds, their function is only to harm oneself and harm other sentient beings, there is no benefit at all in these negative deeds. Thus you should now clearly understand: “I have committed a great mistake!” and you should think: “I will never commit such negative deeds and I will not allow these negative deeds come out from my body, speech and mind!”

Particularly in the case of ordained Sangha it is extremely important to preserve a pure ethical discipline, so that you will not disgrace the profound teaching of the Buddha. Even if you are unable to contribute towards the flourishing of the Buddha-Dharma, it is extremely important not to disgrace the teaching of the Buddha. It is vital to recall this whenever you engage in such practices like confessing the negative

deeds in the past. Some persons, after having received the vow of a monk or a nun, might think: “I have now received the vow of a monk or a nun, which will act as a basis for quickly accumulating positive deeds and so forth,” but one might be unable to observe the commitments and precepts clearly and purely. In such a case receiving these vows will be almost like inviting more negative deeds, because one made a commitment. When you are unable to observe that commitment, you will end up breaking more rules, and through that way you end up committing more negative deeds. Therefore it is important to remember teachings like the one that we find in the *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, where the great bodhisattva Thogme Zangpo says that unless one’s own mistakes are not investigated by oneself, even though you appear in the form of a religious person, you might end up doing irreligious practices, or practices that are not in conformity with the Dharma teaching. Therefore you should always watch your mistakes, and you should always confess them and purify them.

The next branch of the practice is called rejoicing. In this practice of rejoicing you should clearly recall the unthinkable great qualities of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas that you have visualized in front of yourself. You should develop a strong sense of appreciation from the depth of your heart and think how nice, how good, how beneficial these qualities that have been developed by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas achieved such a wonderful state of mind, because when they were in the stage of training they have developed a mind of bodhicitta, a mind wishing to benefit sentient beings, they have actually engaged in the practice of developing the six perfections, and as a result they have either already achieved the state of enlightenment, or they are close to achieving it.

Likewise you should also rejoice in the qualities that are being developed by the sentient beings existing within the six realms. The sentient beings that are within the six realms are still entrapped in the cycle of existence, and their life is quite pitiable, they are in a plight. However, we do find these sentient beings accumulating various types of virtuous practices. And it is quite amazing that they develop the strength to accumulate certain virtuous qualities, although they are overpowered by so many types of problems and sufferings. This is really amazing and we must rejoice in them and appreciate those positive qualities, instead of developing jealousy or competitiveness.

As to your own case, you should also understand and should realize that you have today obtained this precious human life, because you have collected virtuous deeds in the past. And even today you are able to develop certain virtuous qualities, and this is also quite amazing. So you should appreciate it and further strengthen your commitment.

The next two branches are requesting the Buddhas to turn the wheel of the doctrine or to give teachings, and requesting them not to pass away. These two practices are explained in terms of a supremely

emanated body of the Buddha. In the case of the supreme emanations of the Buddhas, we request them to continuously appear in this world and to keep on giving Dharma teachings, and we also request them not to pass away.

Finally, the seventh branch is called dedication. This means you should dedicate all virtuous deeds that you have done, not only for achieving higher rebirth, or just for achieving liberation, but you should try to recall vividly all these virtuous qualities and dedicate them for achieving enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. In other words you should think: “May these virtues that I have earned become a cause for alleviating the temporary and long-lasting sufferings of all sentient beings.”

We admire the qualities of Buddhas and bodhisattvas that we have visualized in front of ourselves. Why do we admire them? We admire them because they possess bodhicitta; they possess this altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Now, if this is the case, it is very relevant and worthwhile that we ourselves make an attempt to achieve or to generate such an altruistic wish or bodhicitta. The purpose of generating such a wish is not for personal gain or personal happiness, but to be able to help all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment.

Therefore it is extremely important to make a concerted effort in developing this bodhicitta. Even if it is just a word related to the practice of bodhicitta, you should repeat these words, make your mind familiar with these teachings, these words that are related to the development of bodhicitta, and it is in this way that you should cultivate this altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment to be of benefit to all sentient beings.

[Mandala Offering]

This completes the practice and visualization of the seven-limb practice. With regard to the actual cultivation of bodhicitta, as I said earlier, it is important to systematically familiarize your mind with the aspects and objects of bodhicitta. In this case it is helpful to recall the verse from the *Bodhicharyavatara*, where it says that all the happiness that we see in this world is the result of cherishing the well-being of other sentient beings, and all the sufferings that we see in this world are due to the self-cherishing attitude. There’s no need for me to elaborate much more, if you simply see the difference between yourself and the Buddha, you will be able to clearly see that the Buddha has achieved such a perfect state of enlightenment, because he has always practiced altruism, because he always cared for the well-being of other sentient beings, whereas in our case, we are unable to fulfill even our individual purposes, because we always get engrossed in the self-cherishing attitude.

In our ordinary pursuit we want to be powerful, we want to be strong, we want to be rich, and even in dreams we always think about all those things that bring some kind of temporary delight and peace to our mind. This clearly shows how strongly we are influenced by the self-grasping mind, and such a kind of strong self-cherishing attitude is present not only among human beings, but it is even present among the animals. Now, if we were able to achieve whatever we aspired to, then it would be wonderful. By this time we should have fulfilled our individual purposes, and we should have nothing to complain anymore, because from beginningless time we have always been pursuing this self-cherishing attitudes. But because we have followed the wrong path, because the self-cherishing attitude is the wrong path, because of this we have achieved nothing. This can be clearly understood if you carefully study your present plight.

This being the case, now it is high time to sit and pause and reflect: “Is there any other better method for improving my purpose, for achieving my purpose of long-term benefit and happiness?” In this regard it will be quite helpful and quite important if you reflect and contemplate on the teaching on bodhicitta, which was taught by countless Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the past, which was practiced by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the past. If you carefully reflect on the countless qualities of the development of bodhicitta, you will find some amazing qualities. For example, if you reflect on the qualities right from the Buddha to your spiritual master, and if you look at positive qualities that you can see in your Dharma friends that are sitting around you, you will be able to see that they have these different positive qualities basically because they have a wish to benefit other sentient beings. So this altruistic attitude is really the source of all positive qualities. The more you have a wish to benefit other sentient beings, the more your mind will be relaxed, the more your mind will be calm and will be at peace. Therefore it is definite that following this path of bodhicitta taught by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the past will give you long-lasting peace and happiness.

Now, how should we do that? What is our present plight? Our present plight is such that we have kept the self-cherishing attitude at the innermost place of our heart, and similarly, the misconception of the reality, the self-grasping attitude, is also placed within the innermost of our heart. We have taken refuge in these two very, very negative emotions – the self-cherishing attitude and the self-grasping attitude. And because of having taken refuge in the self-cherishing attitude and the self-grasping attitude, we continue to encounter innumerable problems, unceasing streams of difficulties, one after the other. Sometimes it even seems that we are so overwhelmed by this suffering, that we feel as if we are confined in the darkness of suffering and problems.

Because we have now found this precious human life and encountered the Buddha’s teaching, this is the time to see these two misconceptions, the self-cherishing attitude and the self-grasping attitude, as our

sworn enemies. And we should take the wonderful example of Buddhas and bodhisattvas and try to cultivate the qualities of a bodhisattva. If you do so, then you are really fulfilling the purpose of being a human being, fulfilling the meaning of a human life. If you follow such a path, then you are really an intelligent person, really a wise person. This is so because the mind cherishing the well-being of other sentient beings is the gateway to all types of peace and happiness, whereas the self-cherishing attitude is the gateway to all types of downfalls, sufferings and problems. Through this kind of reflection, at this point you should develop some sense of appreciation, enthusiasm and delight towards generating bodhicitta.

Now here in this gathering it is possible that there may be listeners who are not Buddhists, and among those who are not Buddhists there could be some who are following one or the other religion. If you are someone who is following Christianity, then you can reflect on the presence of Jesus and Mary, and reflect on their positive qualities. As to the Christians, when they regard Jesus with great respect, this is not because Jesus has strong power, because he is a strong man or very rich. He is highly respected because of the presence of compassion, because of the presence of a benevolent mind in him. Therefore, if you are someone who sincerely practices the message of love to god, then you should also love your fellow human beings.

Like Christianity, all major religious traditions of the world are similar in giving the common message of developing love, compassion, brotherhood and so forth. So, if you are a follower of any religion other than Buddhism, you also have plenty of opportunities to develop and reflect on these positive qualities, the wish to help others and benefit others.

Even if you are someone who has no trust or belief in any kind of religion, even if you are a strong atheist, even in this case you do respect the point of becoming a good person, a beneficial person. And it is for this reason that today, in this highly developed modern world, the Buddha is seen as the embodiment of compassion, and in this way the Buddha is respected not only by the believers, but he is respected by many non-believers because of the appreciation of these positive qualities. Therefore, even in the case of those who do not believe in any particular religion, it would be quite helpful if you make some determination, thinking: "I will lead a compassionate life, a life that doesn't harm other sentient beings!" If during this session you reflect on this point, right during this session it will bring some kind of peace, happiness, tranquility and relaxation into your mind. And because of this inner relaxation, inner tranquility that you develop, you might be able to carry smiles on your face, and at the end of this session when you go out, perhaps you might be able to carry on smiling, and later on when you meet your family members, they might ask you: "What happened to you? Did someone give you anything because you look so happy today?" This is obviously not because of some material gift, but because of your inner

tranquility and relaxation.

[Generation of bodhicitta by reciting three verses

*With the wish to liberate all migrators
Until I reach the essence of enlightenment
I will always take refuge
in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.*

*With wisdom love, compassion and so on,
I will make efforts to benefit sentient beings.
By abiding before the Buddhas, I generate the
mind of complete enlightenment.*

*For as long as the space endures
and as long as sentient beings remain,
for that long I will abide
to dispel the suffering of beings.*

The first verse is taking refuge. You take refuge not only for your personal well-being and benefit, but you take refuge for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The second verse refers to the actual generation of bodhicitta. This means, you are making a commitment to develop compassion supported by wisdom, not only for yourself but for the benefit of all sentient beings. It is in this way that you develop bodhicitta. This is the actual process of generation of bodhicitta.

The third verse is from the *Bodhicharyavatara* by Shantideva, and this verse is recited and reflected for stabilizing the bodhicitta that you have developed earlier.

After having generated such a bodhicitta, it is vital to try to continuously practice this in order to strengthen your determination towards achieving enlightenment. However, after having generated this bodhicitta here, if you claim that from today onwards you are a bodhisattva, this is a mistake, this is wrong. It will take a long time until you become an actual bodhisattva, in some cases it might take a few eons. So what we have done today by generating bodhicitta is like moving onto a railway track – you have just turned your face and you have made a commitment to follow this direction. It will take a long time to develop real bodhicitta, but if you sustain your practice and continuously make an effort to generate it, then gradually you will pick up bits and pieces of the qualities of bodhicitta.

Some people who are very shortsighted might think that by repeating these three verses of generating bodhicitta three times they become bodhisattvas, and by undertaking a three-year and three-month retreat they get enlightened. If one expects such a kind of push-button enlightenment, then this is a clear sign that one will not be able to achieve these qualities.

For this reason the great master Atisha has said with regard to the cultivation of the sun- and moon-like bodhicitta – the sun-like bodhicitta refers to the ultimate bodhicitta, and the moon-like bodhicitta refers to the conventional bodhicitta – even if it takes countless eons, it doesn't matter, and I think this is absolutely true. Because if you reflect carefully, what have we been doing from beginningless time, or what are you doing? We have been practicing the self-cherishing attitude and self-grasping attitude. And what is our present plight? What have we achieved? We have achieved nothing! Therefore time does not really matter. If you make a move towards generating these bodhicittas, then with the passage of time you will be developing the qualities of bodhicitta bit by bit, and this makes your life meaningful, this makes your existence meaningful.

In fact, for a person who follows the path of a bodhisattva, the prayer is what we have cited from the *Bodhicharyavatara*: “As long as space remains, may I too remain to dispel the sufferings of sentient beings.” A person who makes such a prayer, this person's mind is instilled with energy and strength, and for such a person with such determination time is really not a factor. On the other hand, if you remain shortsighted, you will lose your mental courage. And therefore, as is being said in the *Bodhicharyavatara* and *Precious Garland*, we should regard ourselves as one of those elements like earth, water and so forth, and continue to develop such a bodhicitta and pray to be of benefit to all sentient beings.

Now we will continue with the *Stages of Meditation* by Kamalashila. I must mention that in terms of Buddhist practice, it is extremely important that one should be well versed in the teaching of the Buddha, and at the same time one should sincerely and fully engage in the practice. The part of the practice is extremely important, because what we are studying here is not like any other academic subject, like history. The very purpose of being well versed in the teaching is to be able to relate it to our own mental continuum in order to be able to practice it. Therefore it is important to thoroughly understand the teaching on the one hand, and on the other hand to try to practice what you have learned, what you have studied.

With regard to the different thrones that you see on the stage, the heights of these thrones are not determined in terms of inner spiritual qualities, these are determined according to the Tibetan hierarchy and social status. The Dalai Lama having the highest social status, I have the highest throne, so therefore the heights of these thrones are not determined in terms of spiritual realization.

It is said that in the past Mongolian scholars made a kind of apt remark by saying that the Tibetan lamas have long names but very short qualities, and the great masters in the past have short names but long qualities. So in the case of the Dalai Lama, I have also a very long name – Jetsun Jampel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso.

Of course this is just an aside. In addition to this long name, when a long life offering is made to the lama sitting on a high throne, then the disciples or those who offer the long life offering recite beautifully composed prayers, which further exaggerate the qualities of the lama. And on such occasions, if the lama also raises his eyebrows, pretending or accepting that he has those qualities, there's a risk of even losing one's vow or ending up committing many negative deeds or telling a lie, so therefore one has to be really careful on those occasions.

I was explaining these points in reference to the necessary causes for achieving proper contemplation, for developing the prerequisites or causes of special insight. Three causes are being mentioned here as causes or prerequisites of development of special insight, as is cited in the booklet on page 9 in the *Stages of Meditation*. They are: relying on holy persons, seriously seeking extensive instructions and proper contemplation. With regard to relying on holy persons His Holiness briefly mentioned that point. With regard to seriously seeking extensive instructions, that means that you should be someone who is versed in the teachings and who has studied major texts.

In this case the instructions and advice of the highly learned reincarnated lama called the Nyengung Tulku will be extremely useful. He makes this apt comment by saying that if you read various texts and teachings you will find that they are of two categories. There's one process of presentation of the teaching, which is done in accordance with the general process or general trend of the teachings as a whole: we have for example the six texts composed by Nagarjuna and five different texts composed by Maitreya. These texts are taught in accordance with the general process and trend of the stages of the path taught by the Buddha. And then there are other kinds of instructions and teachings, which are taught according to the need of a particular individual person. An example of these types of teachings, which are primarily taught for the benefit of a single individual person, are the *Poems of Saraha*, or *Doha of Saraha*. Out of these two processes of instructions and teachings, if you follow the process and trend of the first teaching, there's no way you can make a mistake, there is no danger of falling onto the wrong path, because you are following a teaching which systematically explains the whole stages of the path leading to enlightenment. So here there is no risk. In the case of following the second kind of instruction, which is taught particularly for one individual person, keeping in mind the need of that particular individual, it is not sure by studying such personal instructions, whether you will be able to understand the complete teaching of the Buddha as a whole or not.

If you read from the *Stages of Meditation*, there is a paragraph, which starts by saying

What is meant by seriously seeking extensive instruction? This is to listen seriously with respect

to the definitive and interpretable meaning of the twelve branches of the Buddha's teachings.

Then it cites a quotation from the *Unraveling of the Thought Sutra*.

Now we are going to talk about the prerequisites for developing special insight. Of the two types of special insight, here we are primarily talking about the transcendental special insight, and therefore we are talking about the prerequisites of the transcendental special insight. Before one can achieve this transcendental special insight, one should have realized emptiness, thus it is important to first of all study properly those texts, which explain the meaning of suchness or emptiness.

With regard to the teachings of the Buddha, there are two types, interpretative teachings and ultimate teachings. In the case of the Vaibashikas and Sautrantikas, they do not make such a division into interpretative or ultimate teachings in the teachings of the Buddha, because they say that all teachings of the Buddha are ultimate teachings. It is just the Mind-only school and the Madhyamika school which make this classification of the interpretative and ultimate teachings in the teachings of the Buddha.

In accordance with the Mind-only school, interpretative teachings are those teachings, which you cannot accept literally, whereas ultimate teachings are those teachings, which you can accept literally. However, in the case of the Madhyamika school of thought, the meaning of interpretative and definitive teachings is a different one. According to them, the teaching of the Buddha, which directly and explicitly explains the ultimate truth as the main object, that teaching is called ultimate teaching, and the teaching, which explicitly and directly explains the meaning of the conventional truth, that is called interpretative teaching. So the demarcation between the interpretative and ultimate teaching is done in terms of the subject.

Further on the *Stages of Meditation* explains the third factor or prerequisite, the quality of special insight that is proper contemplation. And the text reads:

What is meant by proper contemplation? It is properly establishing the definitive and interpretable sutras.

This means that you should develop proper understanding of the teaching of the Buddha in general and particularly of the meaning of the two truths. You must repeatedly reflect on their meaning, until finally you should be able to precisely perceive the meaning of the ultimate truth. And once you have developed conviction towards the meaning of the ultimate truth, then by focusing on emptiness you will be able to undertake the meditation of development of calm abiding as well as special insight. Having reflected on the meaning of emptiness, if you then make your mind one-pointedly abide on that, this is called "seeking

the meditation through the view”. You can also “seek the view through meditation”. This means that you first achieve calm abiding, and then by this means you should also seek the view. Therefore it is of utmost importance that you should have a precise understanding of the meaning of the ultimate truth.

In the following lines it explains about the process of actual meditation. With regard to meditation – there are two types of meditation, during the meditative session and during the post-meditative session. With regard to the post-meditative session practices, we read in the *Stages of Meditation* on page 9:

Yogis should at all times avoid fish, meat and so forth, should eat with moderation and avoid foods that are not conducive to health.

As is clearly mentioned here, one should be moderate in eating, furthermore without sleeping one should engage in the practice of the yoga and so forth. All these points are explained in the *Stages of Meditation*.

With regard to the actual meditative session, you should first set up a proper motivation, then you should reflect on the practice of the seven limbs, through which you purify the negative deeds and accumulate positive deeds, and then you should adopt a proper physical posture, which in the text is likened to the seven-fold Vairochana posture. Then the text explains the process of developing a calmly abiding mind, the focus of which could be a conventional truth. It could as well be an ultimate truth, it could be an external object, it could be an internal object, with regard to an internal object it could be one’s own mind, or one could also focus on the channels, energies and drops within one’s body. And likewise, if you reflect on the twelve sets of scriptures of the Buddha, if you summarize all the twelve scriptures of the Buddha, and then let your mind focus on these summarized points, then this is a calmly abiding meditation. On the other hand, if you undertake a detailed study of the twelve sets of scriptures, this is the process of meditation of the special insight.

During the actual process of developing a calmly abiding mind, the really important point is not to allow your mind to get distracted. In fact, the very word “calm abiding” comes from the meaning “let your mind be totally calmed from all types of external and internal distractions, and let it abide on the chosen object one-pointedly”. This is the meaning of a calm abiding mind.

What are those negative factors that interrupt the meditation of calm abiding? It is interrupted by distraction and sinking or dullness. If you develop attachment towards a certain external object, by recalling the pleasures that you have experienced in the past and so forth, then this is called excitement, which is also one form of mental distraction. Another distraction, another interruption is mental dullness or mental sinking. Mental sinking is quite a powerful kind of interruption in the sense that during that

interruption where the mind becomes dull, although the mind may be focused on the object, there is no clarity of the object. And with regard to the subject of the mind itself, it loses its alertness, it loses its intensity and it becomes dull. There lies a great risk, because you might still think that you are meditating and focusing on the object, even though there is no clarity. Thus at a quick glance you might find that you are still doing a wonderful meditation, because you have not lost the object of meditation, but nevertheless you have not developed any clarity towards the object, your mind is not fresh, the intensity is lost. For this reason, gradually sinking into subtler forms of mental dullness is a way to confound mental sinking with actual meditation. Therefore it is a great risk to fall into this habit of continuously remaining in this state of mental dullness or mental sinking, because then your mind will gradually become very dull, the sharpness of the mind will be lost.

When, however, mental distraction or mental excitement arises, mental excitement arises because the spirit of your mind is heightened too much, is too much raised up. When the spirit of the mind is heightened very much, the mind starts getting distracted from the object, therefore, as a counteracting force to that, you should bring down the spirit of the mind and make it focus again on the object. This is one way of solving the problem of mental excitement.

Mental sinking or dullness arises because the spirit of the mind is too low, it has lost its spirit. In this case, what you need to do is to raise the spirit of the mind, to heighten the spirit of the mind. The spirit of the mind can be raised or heightened by reflecting on a certain delightful object, something that brings joy, light and illumination into your mind.

So it is important to clearly understand the nature of mental distraction, the nature of mental excitement, and the nature of mental sinking. You should also be able to quickly identify them, whenever they come and whenever they interrupt you, and in this way make sure that your calm abiding mind is not disturbed by these two negative interruptions.

With regard to the development and practice of a calmly abiding mind, if you practice it very systematically and very rigorously, then it is possible to develop it even within a few months. The purpose of the development of a calm abiding mind is to be able to develop special insight, and therefore, even if you are able to develop a calm abiding mind, you should not be satisfied with this achievement. As we have read yesterday, the purpose of developing a calm abiding mind is to be able to eliminate afflictive emotions, and afflictive emotions can be eliminated only by realizing suchness, only by developing a special insight that develops precise insight or understanding of the nature of suchness, the nature of ultimate truth, and to this end it is important to understand the meaning of the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of phenomena.

The selflessness of the person and of phenomena that is explained here is in accordance with Kamalashila. Kamalashila was a disciple of the abbot Shantarakshita, who was a follower of the Svatantrika-Madhyamika school of thought. According to him, he accepted the conventionally inherent existence of all phenomena, and he also accepted external objects. According to this presentation, the antidote to afflictive emotions has to be developed which is the wisdom realizing the selflessness of a person, and the antidote for removing obscurations to enlightenment is the wisdom realizing the selflessness of phenomena. They also say that the wisdom realizing the selflessness of a person is grosser compared with the wisdom realizing the selflessness of phenomena.

Therefore in the *Stages of Meditation* on page 12, Kamalashila says:

Yogis should analyze in the following manner: a person is not observed as separate from the mental and physical aggregates, elements and the sense powers. Nor is a person of the nature of the aggregates and so forth, because the aggregates and so forth have the entity of being many and impermanent. Others have imputed the person as permanent and single. The person as a phenomenon cannot exist except as one or many, because there is not other way of existing. Therefore, we must conclude that the assertion of the worldly “I” and “mine” is wholly mistaken.

Let us first look at the understanding of a person according to some non-Buddhist schools of thought. They say that there is a person separate from the body, separate from the mind. The reason they put forth for saying that there should be a person other than the physical body is that when your “I” sees an object, then you say “I have seen the object”, clearly demarcating that there is an “I” separate from the body. Likewise we talk about remembering what we have done in the morning, and in the case of people who are able to remember past lives, they talk about their life in the past lives. Therefore they say that from these experiences we can conclude that there is a person apart or separate from the psychophysical aggregates. It is also not easy for them to pinpoint a person within the psychophysical aggregates, so therefore they say that the person is something that is totally different from the psychophysical aggregates. And they also say that this person that is separate from the psychophysical aggregates is something that is permanent, something that is independent, and something that is partless. For example, you say “when I was a child”, clearly saying that “I was there when I was a child”, and you think that this “I” is still present today, or you would also say “in my past life”, again showing that you were there in the past life. So by these assertions, by these statements, those non-Buddhist schools of thought say that there is a person that continuously comes from past lives and goes to the next lives, and this person is permanent, partless and independent from the psychophysical aggregates. However, when we analyze our actual experience, if we try to find such a person apart from the psychophysical aggregates, it is not possible to find such a person.

Therefore Kamalashila here clearly refutes the viewpoint of the non-Buddhist schools of thought by saying that a person is not observed as separate from the mental and psychophysical aggregates, elements, sense powers and so forth. This is only the presentation made by the non-Buddhist schools of thought. The text goes on: “nor is a person of the nature of the aggregates and so forth, because the aggregates and so forth have the characteristic of being many and impermanent.” This means a person is not of the nature of the aggregates and so forth, because, if the person were of the nature of the psychophysical aggregates, this would imply that just as there are so many different types of psychophysical aggregates, there should be a similar number of “I” or persons. So that’s the meaning of saying that “nor is a person of the nature of the aggregates and so forth, because the aggregates and so forth have the entity of being many and impermanent”, whereas the person is one.

“Others have imputed the person as permanent and single.” This is how the others, the non-Buddhist schools of thought, impute the person as something permanent and single, saying that the person is not of the same nature with the psychophysical aggregates and is not observed as one with the psychophysical aggregates.

And finally Kamalashila says that “we must conclude that the assertion of the worldly “I” and “mine” is wholly mistaken.” This view, as presented by the non-Buddhist schools of thought to our ordinary unenlightened mind, means that when we think about the person, we tend to see that person as an owner and the psychophysical aggregates as something being owned by that person. We tend to see the relation between the person and the psychophysical aggregates owned by the person like the relation between the king and his followers, the king and his citizens.

And because of such a conception, it is said in the *Pramanavarttika* that sometimes when we see a person with an elegant physical form, we even wish “how nice if I were able to change my body with his kind of body”. Thus, we have this kind of misconception of the reality. This clearly shows that we tend to see the body and the psychophysical aggregates as totally separate, totally different, and we even go to the extent of thinking that it is possible to change the body and so forth.

This kind of grasping of seeing the person as something permanent, partless and solitary or independent, this kind of grasping is called the grasping of the person. This grasping of the person, the “I” and the “mine”, is completely mistaken and is in fact the root cause of suffering, because there is no self-supporting, self-sufficient person or a permanent person, as we have understood. Therefore we must analyze and see how such a conception is wrong, how such a conception is a misconception.

As you have seen in the *Stages of Meditation*, there is a clear classification of the selflessness of the

person and the selflessness of the phenomena. This kind of demarcation is very essential and very important for properly understanding the meaning of the ultimate reality.

The texts that are related to the Hearers or the Shrivakayana primarily talk about the selflessness of a person. When we develop attachment and hatred, as is clearly outlined in the *Pramanavarttika*, it says that when we develop attachment and hatred, then these negative emotions develop based on the conception of the “I”. In the *Pramanavarttika* it clearly says that when there is this feeling of self, then you also develop the feeling of others, and based on this you develop attachment to yourself and to those that are on your side like your friends and relatives. Similarly you develop hatred against, and the feeling of separation from, those who belong to the side of others. Based on this you develop all types of faults and negative emotions like attachment, hatred and so forth. In this way we need to see how this kind of grasping of the self is the root cause of all problems, the root cause of development of all types of afflictive emotions.

But this does not mean that in general there is no “I” at the conventional level, because at the conventional level there is a nominally imputed “I”, which is the basis of experiencing harm and help and benefit. Now, the degree of the force of grasping the “I” makes a big difference in terms of cultivating afflictive emotions. This can be clearly understood if you reflect on it even at a very ordinary level. For example, even in a very ordinary case, among very ordinary people, you can observe differences when it comes to talking about “me” and “you”, “I” and “others” and so forth. When you talk about “I” among different types of people, there are some people that, when they talk about “I”, do so with much arrogance, much pride, and by developing this feeling of “I” they tend to exploit others, they tend to denigrate others, look down upon others. Whereas there are other people who, when talking about “I”, tend to see that “I” as something low, and thus by reflecting on that “I” they develop some sense of humility. When you develop a strong sense of ego, and a strong, tight grasping of the “I”, then this becomes a source of problems, this will lead to the development of all types of afflictive emotions. Whereas, when you do not hold the “I” with great tightness, with great force, with strong grasping, there will be less development of other types of problems, other types of afflictive emotions.

When you have a strong ego, strong feeling of “I”, because of this tight and strong grasping of the “I”, you will not be able to tolerate even very small and minor problems, you get highly explosive, you get very irritated over them. On the other hand, if the grasping of the “I” is smaller, if it is not that big, then you will not care much whether others praise you or whether others harm you. There will be not too many ups and downs, and in this way you will be able to maintain the calmness of the mind, the stability of the mind. This point is also very clearly mentioned by some medical doctors. According to their medical findings they say that persons who make too much self references and always talk about “I”,

“mine” and so forth, these people are more prone to heart attack. This is true, because when you have a strong grasping of the “I”, you are unable to tolerate even minor problems, and thus you tend to magnify these small problems, you are not able to tolerate them, and thus you get all types of physical and mental problems.

Therefore the question is how to reduce this strong, tight grasping of the “I”? In order to reduce this strong, tight grasping of the “I”, it is important to first of all identify the “I” at the nominal level and the grasping of the “I” that must be eliminated, or the “I” which is the object of negation. It is important to find the actual mode of existence of the “I”. When you search, when you analyze, when you investigate the ultimate reality of the “I” and when you see the mode of perception of that “I”, how it perceives an object, how this “I” arises, then you will find that there is a big difference between the presence of such self-grasping and the absence of such self-grasping.

Take the example of this rosary in my hand. Let us assume that this rosary belongs to someone else. I see this rosary being held in the hands of someone else, I see that rosary from a distance, and I might think, “Yes, he has a good rosary.” Then suddenly the rosary falls from his or her hand, then I think, “Yes, the rosary fell down to the ground,” but I do not show much concern, because the rosary does not belong to me. Now let us say that later on someone offers you that rosary or you buy such a rosary and you own the rosary, then, if the rosary falls down from your hand, you get highly concerned, thinking that one of the beads might have broken and so forth. So this clearly shows that this state of not being able to tolerate things that belong to you being broken and so forth, is because of your strong sense of self, strong grasping of self.

Because of this strong grasping of the self we tend to demarcate, as I have highlighted right in the beginning, and in fact I have touched on this point earlier also – when you have this strong self-grasping, then you tend to demarcate people, you categorize some as your friends and bring them to your own side, and you categorize some as not belonging to your side, as neutral sentient beings, and you categorize some as your enemies. On the other hand, it would be better to perceive clearly that there is no such “I” which is permanent, partless, independent, which is self-supporting, it would be better to see that clearly, and particularly to understand that “Just as I have an “I”, similarly all other persons have also an “I”, and the “I” that I possess is nothing special. Therefore, why should I think that the “I” that I have is something special, or something superior?” When you are able in this way to see your “I” as completely equal to the “I” of other people, this will also help reduce your ego. So this is the way you should see the selflessness of the person.

Let us now look at the selflessness of the phenomena. Just as you have seen that the person, the one who

enjoys the object, does not have an inherent or independent existence, similarly those phenomena other than the self, just like the example of the rosary that I have presented before you, they also, like the person, do not have true existence, they do not have ultimate existence. Now this kind of understanding the lack of true existence with regard to objects enjoyed by the person is also very, very important, because normally, when we develop attachment, hatred and so forth, we do so with reference to a particular object. When we see or encounter an attractive and pleasant object, we tend to develop attachment, and when we encounter an object, which is ugly, which we do not like, then we tend to develop hatred or anger. Therefore, if you are able to see that just like the person the objects, the phenomena that the person enjoys, also do not have such true existence, then you will be able to reduce your attachment, and you will also be able to reduce your hatred and other afflictive emotions.

For example, the philosophy of the Mind-only school of thought holds that the object, like that of a rosary, and the mind are substantially not separate, substantially they are one, and from that point of view they talk about emptiness, which is the lack of substantial separateness of the subject and object. When we say that the subject and the object are substantially the same, it means that what you experience, or the object that your mind engages in, is basically a reflection of your mind. Thus, the way you see, the way things appear to you, is very much dependent on your outlook, on your mental attitude. Through the realization of the lack of substantial separateness of the subject and the object, you will be able to reduce your attachment, hatred etc. towards the object. In this way you will come to see that objects, like psychophysical aggregates and so forth, also do not exist as they appear to your mind, and in this way you will be able to reduce and eliminate many of the misconceptions, many of the wrong thoughts or improper minds that you develop with reference to these external objects.

In Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation* on page 12 it reads:

Meditation on the selflessness of phenomena should also be done in the following manner: phenomena, in short, are included under the five aggregates, the twelve sources of perception and the eighteen elements. The physical aspects of the aggregates, sources of perception and elements are, in the ultimate sense, nothing other than aspects of the mind. This is because when they are broken into subtle particles and the nature of the parts of these subtle particles is individually examined, no definite identity can be found.

This is a presentation of the selflessness of phenomena in accordance with the Mind-only school of thought. According to the Mind-only school of thought externally existent phenomena, externally existent objects are not accepted. And when they talk about the selflessness of phenomena, they talk about two types of selflessness of phenomena, one that appears to conceptual thought, and another type which appears to a sense consciousness, which is a non-conceptual thought. According to the Mind-only school of thought, things appear to the mind because of the activation of imprints of the mind, even though there

is no external object. With regard to imprints they talk about different types of imprints: imprints of similar type, imprints based on terms, expressions and thoughts, imprints due to the view of self-grasping, and further on they talk about fifteen different types of imprints, like the self, others, time, number and so forth.

All these phenomena that appear to the mind are of the same substance to the mind. Let us take the example of the eye consciousness seeing a rosary. When the eye consciousness perceives or sees the rosary as a rosary, then they say that this is due to the activation of the imprint of similar type. And when the rosary is seen as an object of engagement of terms and names, then they say that this is due to the activation of the imprints of past expressions and thoughts. And when you see this basis of engagement of terms and names as existing from its own side, this is due to the activation or awakening of imprints of the grasping of the self.

However, in reality things do not exist as they appear to the mind. There is a disparity, a gap between appearances and reality.

This appearance of an object as if existing from its own side, as a basis of name and thought, this is the grasping of the self which appears to a conceptual thought. And the lack of existence of such a self is what appears to the wisdom mind.

The source of the Mind-only school of thought is found in the Sutra itself, where the Buddha in one of his texts clearly says that these three realms are only mind, meaning that the three realms are of same substance to the mind, and of same nature to the mind. Similarly there are also quotations from Nagarjuna, where in one of his texts it says that all the four elements and so forth can be included in the consciousness. Thus, in this philosophical school of thought any external object is refuted. Such a kind of refutation of the existence of an external object is also quite beneficial in removing attachment, hatred and so forth towards external objects.

However, if you study the Madhyamika school of thought, they would rather tell the Mind-only school of thought: “Your presentation of emptiness in the form of lack of substantial separateness of the subject and object is wonderful, it is also very useful. However, the problem is that you have refuted only the external object, whereas in the case of the mind you still tend to say that the mind has true existence, ultimate existence. Therefore, when the mind encounters ups and downs, when the mind encounters sufferings, problems and so forth, then this grasping of the mind as having true existence will not help reduce the mental afflictive emotions.”

Therefore it is important to see that, just as the objects of engagement of the mind do not have external existence or true existence, similarly the mind that perceives the gap between appearances and reality does not have true or independent existence either. This is explained in the text *Stages of Meditation* itself, where Kamalashila says:

In the ultimate sense the mind too cannot be real. How can the mind which apprehends only the false nature of physical form, and so forth, and appearances in various aspects, be real? Just as physical forms, and so forth, are false, since the mind that does not exist separately from physical forms, and so forth, which are false, it too is false. Just as physical forms, and so forth, possess various aspects and their identities are neither one nor many, similarly, since the mind is not different from them, its identity too is neither one nor many. Therefore, the mind by nature is like an illusion.

So it is in this way, from the point of view of the Madhyamika school, they talk about the lack of true existence of all phenomena, not only the object, but also the mind. And this point is also further explained in the text.

If you analyze the nature of the mind, if you analyze the nature of the past mind, the nature of the upcoming or future mind, the way the mind sees different aspects and forms of objects, and the way the mind has a fleeting nature, if you reflect on all this, then you will find that “mind” too does not have true existence or real existence. So this kind of lack of true existence from the Madhyamika point of view is applicable to all phenomena, and that’s why the Madhyamika school of thought talks about four types of emptiness, two types of emptiness, sixteen types of emptiness and so forth. When it speaks about the sixteen types of emptiness, it speaks about emptiness of emptiness. This means that, not only in the case of conventional truth, or conventional phenomena, but also in the case of ultimate phenomena like emptiness itself, if you analyze and investigate whether emptiness is its own ultimate nature, you will find that that is not the case, because if you again analyze the nature of emptiness you will find it too is devoid of inherent existence. So this is the meaning of emptiness of emptiness.

Now if this is the case, the Mind-only school of thought might face some problems when they encounter certain quotations from the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, where it speaks about all phenomena having no entity, or being empty of entity, empty of nature. This is interpreted by the Mind-only school of thought by explaining that when the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* says that all phenomena are devoid of their own nature, that is an interpretative teaching, and not an ultimate teaching. It is an interpretative teaching in the sense that the “devoid of true nature” could be referred in different contexts, depending upon whether it is an imputed phenomenon, or other-dependent phenomenon, or a thoroughly established phenomenon. With reference to imputed phenomena, the meaning of “devoid of inherent nature” means that they do not have inherent characteristics. In the case of the imputed phenomena and in the case of the other-

dependent phenomena, this means that they do not have inherent production, and in the case of thoroughly imputed phenomena it means that they are devoid of ultimate existence.

Just as the Mind-only school of thought accepts three categories of phenomena, imputed phenomena, other-dependent phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena, similarly the Madhyamikas also accept these three types of phenomena. And when we talk about dependent phenomena it refers to the basis, the foundation, when we talk about imputed phenomena, it refers to the object of negation, and when we talk about thoroughly established phenomena, it refers to the ultimate reality, the emptiness.

Basically both the Mind-only school of thought and the Madhyamika school of thought accept these three types of phenomena, but when it comes to the explanation of the meaning, they do not agree, they have different views. Thus, the followers of the Mind-only school of thought say that the actual thought and intent of the second turning of the wheel of the doctrine is as it has been interpreted by the *Samdhinirmochana Sutra*. However, in accordance with the Madhyamika school of thought they accept the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* not as an interpretative teaching, but as a definitive teaching. However it has to be understood in its proper context, in the sense that when we encounter a word like “there is no form”, it does not mean there is no form in the conventional sense, but it means there is no form having inherent or true existence.

What is really important for you to remember and what is also written here is that, when we talk about meditating on emptiness, it is first of all important to judge and examine what kind of perception, what kind of thought arises in your mind when you think about the “I”, when you think about yourself, when you think about the person? What kind of perception do you develop? Based on your experience you should be able to clearly understand this, and then gradually you will be able to see that there is no “I” as is perceived by your ordinary thought. Although to your ordinary mind the “I” tends to appear as having independent, true existence, in reality there is no such existence. So it is through such an understanding that you will be able to reduce and eliminate the self that is the root cause of samsara.

And if you proceed further in the *Lamp on the Path* by Atisha, you will find that there are verses that explain the benefits of cultivating calm abiding, and also verses explaining the prerequisite qualities for developing calm abiding. Then it also explains the need to develop a union of method and wisdom and so forth. But the main point that I would like to discuss here is explained in verse 47, where Atisha very clearly says:

Understanding emptiness of inherent existence
Through realizing that the aggregates, constituents,

And sources are not produced
Is described as wisdom.

This is the main point that I would like to discuss here. It means that, if you see physical objects or constituents or elements and so forth, you will see that at the conventional level, at the nominal level, there is production, disintegration and so forth in the case of these phenomena. However, this kind of production and cessation or disintegration occurs only at the conventional level, only at the level of being designated by the mind. But if you look at it from the purview of the ultimate analysis there is no such production, there is no such cessation, there is no such disintegration. Such an understanding is really the development of wisdom realizing emptiness.

Likewise, if you reflect on the meaning of the verse paying homage found in Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom*, this verse speaks about the fact that whichever phenomenon is dependently originated has no cessation, no production, no separateness, no sameness and so forth. What Nagarjuna says there is that, although there is separateness, sameness, permanence, impermanence, production, cessation at the conventional level, when you search at the ultimate level you do not find production, cessation and so forth as the ultimate nature of that particular phenomenon. Because if this interdependently originated nature of production, cessation and so forth actually made up the ultimate nature of a particular phenomenon, then that should be found when searched by a mind that analyses the ultimate reality of a phenomenon.

Therefore we can say, for example, that on the very conventional level we do know that a seed produces a sprout, a seed produces a tree, a flower and so forth. However, at a conventional level we take it for granted that a sprout is produced from the seed, a tree is produced from the seed and so forth, and apart from that we do not go into the details. We do not ask at what point that sprout was produced from the seed, what was the hour, what was the minute, whether the seed and the sprout are of the same nature or of different nature, what are its preceding causes and so forth. We do not analyze it that way, we are simply satisfied and content with the conventional nature, the conventional reality. But if you try to go beyond this conventional sense of being satisfied by what appears on the conventional level, then you will not find it, as is again clearly explained in Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom*, where Nagarjuna says: "Things do not arise from themselves, not from others, not from both, and not without a cause, and therefore things do not have production and so forth."

So these points are further elaborated from verse 47 to verse 53, and particularly if you read the last verse, verse 53, Atisha sums up the point by saying:

Thus, whatever is meditation
 On selflessness, in that it does not observe
 An inherent nature in phenomena,
 Is the cultivation of wisdom.

So this *Lamp on the Path* and the thoughts expressed in the *Lamp on the Path* by Atisha represent the Madhyamika school of thought, even though one of Atisha's teachers Suvarnavajra or Lama Serlingpa was a follower of the Mind-only school of thought. In terms of the philosophical view, however, Atisha followed his teacher Avadhuti or Rigpe Kujug, who followed the thought of Chandrakirti. So the philosophical viewpoint found in the *Lamp on the Path* is the philosophical viewpoint of Chandrakirti.

The ultimate thought of the philosophical viewpoint of Nagarjuna is explained by Buddhapalita. In accordance with Buddhapalita, this ultimate viewpoint on emptiness holds that everything, whether it is a permanent phenomenon or an impermanent phenomenon, whether it is a person or object or it is the mind or object, they all are simply designated, nominated, and they do not have objective or inherent existence from their own side. This is the case whether you analyze the cause, analyze the fruit, analyze the nature, in whatever way you analyze you will find that they are simply designated and have no inherent existence.

Thus, in a nutshell, this point of the Madhyamika school of thought can be clearly understood if you understand the logic of dependent origination, which is again clearly explained in one of Nagarjuna's texts, where it says, "Whichever is in the nature of dependent origination, that is the nature of emptiness, and that alone is the middle way, that alone is the Madhyamika way."

The same point is also explained in the *Four-hundred Verses* by Aryadeva, where he says: "When any particular phenomenon has the nature of dependently originated nature, then it cannot arise independently." So it is from that point of view that things are devoid of inherent existence. And similarly in the commentary of the *Four-hundred Verses* by Chandrakirti, he also clearly says that when we talk about the self, the self refers to a mode of existence which is not at all dependent on others, so that is the meaning of the self. Thus, when we talk here about the self that is the object of negation, we are not talking about the conventional self, but we are talking about the self which is non-existent, although we tend to see it as something having inherent or objective existence.

Therefore it is important to realize that when we are talking about emptiness, it is not equal to nothingness or non-existence. It is the meaning of interdependent existence, because things are interdependent, they do not have an existence which is independent, because dependence and independence are mutually exclusive. It is through such an understanding that you will be able to eliminate the two extremes, the extremes of non-existence and the extremes of independent existence or

permanent existence.

The whole point is again summarized in one of the texts by saying that “In short, there is no phenomenon whose nature is not of dependent origination, and therefore there is no phenomenon whose nature is not empty.”

You will recall that in the beginning of the *Stages of Meditation* there is a brief explanation of the meaning of dependent origination, which was confined primarily to the sense of conditioned phenomena. There the dependent origination is explained in the sense of the cause-effect relationship. But when we talk here about the subtler form of interdependent origination from the Madhyamika point of view, we are not talking about interdependent origination in the sense of cause-effect relationship, but in the sense that everything, whether it is a permanent phenomenon or impermanent phenomenon, is designated by names and terms. And such a mode or way of existence is the true nature of all phenomena, and therefore such a reality pervades all phenomena. This is the meaning of “lack of entity of all phenomena” as is expounded in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* and this kind of explanation of view of emptiness is the most profound.

This means that, as long as you have such a profound view of emptiness, all the lower graspings of the self, as explained in the lower schools of thought, in the non-Buddhist schools of thought, in the schools of thought of the Vaibashika and Sautrantika, and as presented by the Mind-only school of thought, all these self-graspings will not arise, and similarly the afflictive emotions induced by such wrong views will not arise either. So this clearly shows that this is the highest and the most profound philosophical viewpoint. On the other hand, in the case of realization of the view of selflessness of the person and phenomena and so forth, as explained in the lower schools of thought, even if you have a thorough understanding of such philosophical viewpoints, it is still possible that you will develop wrong views with regard to certain objects.

Take, for example, the Mind-only school of thought. Through realization of their view the practitioners will be able to stop certain grosser manifestations of grasping of the self of the person and the self of phenomena, but they will not be able to stop the arising of the grasping of the subtler form of grasping of the self and phenomena, as is explained in the Madhyamika school of thought. In the case of the Madhyamika school of thought, there are no differences in terms of subtlety between the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of the phenomena, these two classifications are made only as a different reference object, the emptiness of the person is called the selflessness of the person, and the emptiness of phenomena other than the person is called selflessness of the phenomena. Apart from the differences of the reference point, apart from the differences of the basis, there is no differences in terms of the subtlety of the viewpoint.

And because of the differences of the philosophical viewpoint, there are also differences in terms of the presentation of the afflictive emotions, how they are presented in different schools of thought.

In the rest of the texts, in the *Lamp on the Path* as well as in Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation*, it clearly says that, if you keep on your meditation and make your mind habituated with such a process of meditation on the selflessness of person and phenomena and so forth, gradually you will be able to traverse from one spiritual ground to the next spiritual ground, leading to the achievement of enlightenment.

For example in the *Lamp on the Path* this point is achieved in verse 59, where it says:

Having meditated on suchness,
Eventually after reaching "heat" and so forth,
The "very joyful" and the others are attained
And before long, the enlightened state of buddhahood.

And finally, I would like to sum up the point by citing a quotation from Nagarjuna, where he says:

Through the virtue accumulated by this, may all sentient beings
Be able to accumulate the collection of merit and wisdom,
And through that way may they all be able to actualize
The truth and the form body of the Buddha.

To sum up the whole point, the most essential and heart practice is the development of these two, the conventional bodhicitta and the ultimate bodhicitta. The development of conventional bodhicitta refers to developing an altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. And the development of the ultimate bodhicitta refers to developing the wisdom realizing emptiness, as we have just now discussed by citing quotations from the *Stages of Meditation* and *Lamp on the Path*. If you take these two practices as the heart and most important practice, then you will be able to directly combat with the two enemies, the self-cherishing attitude and the self-grasping mind. And it is through such a practice of conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta, that you will receive the blessings of the Buddha, and that you will receive the blessings of the lama, and it is in this way that Nagarjuna's prayer will be fulfilled.

Thank you very much!