

THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS *of* TSONGKHAPA



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Lines of Experience

Lam rim nyams mgur



*Popularly known as "The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path
(Lam rim bsdus don)*

(1)

I prostrate before you, (Buddha) Head of the Shakya Clan. Your enlightened body is borne out of tens of millions of positive virtues and the perfect accomplishments.¹ Your enlightened speech grants the wishes of limitless beings. Your enlightened mind sees all knowables as they are.

(2)

I prostrate before you, Maitreya and Mañjuśhri, supreme spiritual sons of this peerless teacher. Assuming responsibility (to further) all Buddha's enlightened deeds, you sport emanations to countless worlds.

(3)

I prostrate before your feet, Nagarjuna and Asanga, embellishments of our Southern Continent. Highly famed throughout the Three Realms,² you have commented on the most difficult to fathom "Mother of the Buddhas"³ according to exactly what was intended.

(4)

I bow to Dipamkara (Atisha), holder of a treasure of instructions (as seen in your "Lamp for the Pathway to Enlightenment").⁴ All the complete, unmitigated points concerning the paths of profound view and widespread action, transmitted intact from these two great forerunners, can be included within it.

(5)

Respectfully, I prostrate before my own (two) spiritual masters.⁵ You are the eyes allowing (disciples) to behold all of the infinite scriptural pronouncements, the best ford for those of good fortune to cross to Liberation. You make everything clear through your skilful deeds which are moved by intense loving concern.

(6)

The stages of the path to Enlightenment have been transmitted intact by those who have followed in order both from Nagarjuna and Asanga, those crowning jewels of all erudite masters of our Southern Continent, and the banner of whose fame stands out above the masses. As (following these stages) can fulfil every desirable aim⁶ of all nine kinds of beings,⁷ They are a power-granting king⁸ of precious instruction. Because they collect the streams of thousands of excellent classics, they are indeed an ocean of illustrious, correct explanation.

(7)

(Atisha's text) makes it (easy) to understand how there is nothing incompatible in all (Buddha's) teachings, and makes every scriptural pronouncement, without exception, dawn on your mind as a personal guideline. It makes it easy to discover what Buddha intended⁹ and protects you as well from the abyss of "the great mistake".¹⁰ Because of these (four benefits), what discriminating person among the erudite

masters of India and Tibet will not have his or her mind be completely taken by these stages of the path (arranged) according to three levels of motivation,¹¹ the supreme instructions to which many fortunate ones have devoted themselves.

(8)

Although (there is much merit to be gained from) listening to or reciting even once this brief manner (of Atisha's text) in which can be included the essential points of all the scriptural pronouncements, yet it is certain that you will amass even greater waves of beneficial collections from actually teaching and studying the sacred Dharma (contained within). Therefore you should consider the points (for doing this properly).

(9)

Then after (having taken refuge), you should see that the root cause excellently propitious for as great a mass of good fortune as possible for this and future lives is proper, zealous devotion in thoughts and actions to your sacred Guru who shows you the path (to Enlightenment). Thus you should please him by offering your practice of exactly what he says, which you would not forsake even at the cost of your life. I, the yogi,¹² have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(10)

This working basis (of a human form endowed) with liberties¹³ is superior to a wish-granting gem. Moreover, such is only obtained this very one time. Difficult to acquire and easily lost, (it passes in a flash) like lightning in the sky. Considering how (easily this can happen at any time) and realising that all worldly activities are as (immaterial as) chaff, you must try to take advantage of its essential significance at all times, day and night. I, the yogi, have practised in the same way.

(11)

After death, there is no assurance that you will not be reborn in one of the three unfortunate states.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is certain that the Three Jewels of Refuge¹⁵ have the power to protect you from their terrors. For this reason, your taking of refuge should be extremely solid and you should follow its advice without ever letting (your commitments) weaken. Moreover, (your success in) so doing depends on your considering thoroughly which are the black or the white karmic actions together with their results, and then living according to the guides of what is to be adopted or rejected. I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(12)

The fullest strides (of progress) in actualising the supreme paths will not come about unless you have attained a working basis (of an ideal human body) that is complete with (all eight ripened favourable) qualities.¹⁶ Therefore you must train in the causal (virtuous actions) that will preclude (your attainment of such a form) from being incomplete. (Furthermore) as it is extremely essential to cleanse away the stains of black karmic debts and downfalls (from broken vows) tarnishing the three gateways (of your body, speech and mind), and especially (to remove) your karmic obstacles (which would prevent such a rebirth), you should cherish continually devoting yourself to (applying) the complete set of four opponent powers¹⁷ (which can purge you of them). I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(13)

If you do not make an effort to think about true sufferings and their drawbacks, you will not properly develop a keen interest to work for Liberation. If you do not consider the stages whereby (true) origins of all suffering place and keep you in cyclic existence, you will not know

the means for cutting the root of this vicious circle. Therefore you should cherish exuding total disgust and renunciation of such existence, while knowing which factors bind you to its wheel. I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(14)

Ever enhancing your Enlightened Motive of Bodhicitta is the mainstay for the Supreme Vehicle's path. It is the basis and foundation for great waves of (altruistic) conduct (to bring you to Enlightenment). Like a gold-making elixir, (it turns) everything (you do) into the two collections,¹⁸ (building up) a treasure of merit gathered from infinitely collected virtues. Knowing this, the Bodhisattvas have held this supreme precious mind as their innermost mental bond. I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(15)

Generosity is the wish-granting gem by which you can fulfil the hopes of sentient beings. It is the best weapon for cutting the knot of miserliness. It is the (altruistic) conduct which enhances your self-confidence and undaunted courage (to help everyone towards Enlightenment). It is the basis for your good reputation to be proclaimed in the ten directions. Knowing this, the wise have devoted themselves to the excellent path of completely giving away their body, possessions and merit. I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(16)

Moral discipline is the water to wash away the stains of faulty actions. It is the ray of moonlight to cool the scorching heat of the delusions. (It makes you) radiant like a Mount Meru in the midst of the nine

kinds of beings. By its power, you are able to bend all beings (to your good influence) without (recourse to) mesmerising glares. Knowing this, the holy ones have safeguarded, as they would their eyes, the rules they have accepted (to keep) purely. I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(17)

Patience is the best adornment (to wear) for those with power and the perfect ascetic practice for those tormented by delusions. It is the high-soaring eagle as the enemy of the snake of anger, and the thickest armour against the weapons of abusive language. Knowing this, (the wise) have accustomed themselves in various ways and forms to the armour of supreme patience. I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(18)

Once you wear the armour of resolute and irreversible enthusiastic perseverance, your expertise in the scriptures and insights will increase like the waxing moon. You will make all your actions meaningful (for attaining Enlightenment) and will bring whatever you undertake to its intended conclusion. Knowing this, the Bodhisattvas have exerted great waves of joyous effort, washing away all laziness. I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(19)

Meditative concentration is the king wielding power over the mind. If you fix it (on one point), it remains there immovable like a mighty Mount Meru. If you project it, it can permeate any virtuous object (at will). It leads to the great exhilarating bliss of having your body and mind be applicable (to any virtuous task). Knowing this, the yogis of (mental) control have devoted themselves continuously to single-minded concentration which overcomes the enemies of mental

wandering (and dullness). I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(20)

Discriminating awareness is the eye with which to behold profound Voidness and the path by which to uproot (ignorance) the source of cyclic existence. It is the treasure of genius praised in all the scriptural pronouncements and is renowned as the supreme lamp that eliminates the darkness of closed-mindedness. Knowing this, the wise who have wished Liberation have advanced themselves along this path with every effort. I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(21)

In (a state of) merely single-pointed meditative concentration, you do not have the insight (which gives you) the ability to cut the root of cyclic existence. Moreover, devoid of a path of mental quiescence, discriminating awareness (by itself) cannot turn back the delusions, no matter how much you analyse them. Therefore, on the horse of unwavering mental quiescence, (the masters) have mounted the discriminating awareness that is totally decisive about how things exist. Then with the sharp weapon of the Middle Path logic, devoid of extremes, they have used wide-ranging discriminating awareness to analyse properly and destroy all underlying supports for their (cognitions) aimed at grasping for extremes. In this way they have expanded their intelligence which has realised Voidness. I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(22)

Once you have achieved single-minded concentration through accustoming yourself to single-pointedness of mind your examination then of individual phenomena with a proper analysis should itself

enhance your single-minded concentration settled extremely firmly, without any wavering, on the actual way in which all things exist. Seeing this the zealous have marvelled at the attainment of a union of mental quiescence and penetrative insight. Is there need to mention that you should pray (to attain one as well)? I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(23)

(Having achieved such a union) you should meditate both on space-like Voidness while completely absorbed (in your meditation sessions) and on illusion-like Voidness when you subsequently arise. By doing this you will, through your union of methods and awareness, become praised as someone perfecting the Bodhisattvas' Conduct. Realising this, those with the good fortune (to have attained Enlightenment) have made it their custom never to be content with merely partial paths. I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(24)

(Renunciation, an Enlightened Motive and a correct view of Voidness) are necessary in common for (achieving) supreme paths through either of the two Mahayana Vehicles of (practising) causes (for Enlightenment)¹⁹ or (simulating now) the results (you will achieve).²⁰ Therefore once you have properly developed these (three principal) paths, you should rely on the skilful captain (of a fully qualified Tantric Master) as your protector and set out (on this latter, speedier vehicle) across the vast ocean of the (four) classes of tantra. Those who have (done so and) devoted themselves to his or her guideline instructions have made their attainment of (a human body with all) liberties and endowments have its full meaning (by achieving Enlightenment in their very lives). I, the yogi, have practised just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(25)

In order to accustom this to my own mind and also to benefit others as well who have the good fortune (to meet with a true Guru and be able to practise what he or she teaches), I have explained here in easily understandable words the complete path pleasing to the Buddhas. I pray that the merit from this may cause all sentient beings never to be parted from these pure and excellent paths. I, the yogi, have offered prayers for just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please offer prayers in the same way.

This concludes *The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path to Enlightenment*, compiled in brief so that they may not be forgotten. It has been written at Ganden Nampar Gyelwai Monastery on Drog Riwochey Mountain, Tibet, by the Buddhist monk, Losang Drakpa, a meditator who has heard many teachings.



Part II

1. *samsāra*. Sometimes, “life cycle,” “cyclic existence.”
2. *nges 'byung niryāna*.
3. *las kyi 'bras bu karmaphala*.
4. *byang chub kyi sems bodhicitta*.
5. *rten 'brel, rten 'byung, pratīyasamutpāda*.

Lines Of Experience

1. The perfect accomplishments are the realisation of an Enlightened Motive of Bodhicitta and a correct view of Voidness.
2. The Three Realms are the Desire, Form and Formless Realms in which consciousness is preoccupied in turn with either desirable sensory objects or meditative absorptions while either possessing a physical form or not. The Desire Realm is inhabited by hell creatures, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, anti-gods and the first six classes of gods, the Form Realm by the next seventeen classes of and the Formless by the top four classes of gods.
3. The “Mother of the Buddhas” refers to *The Sūtras on the Perfection of Discriminating Awareness (Prajñā pāramitā Sūtras)* delivered by Buddha on Vulture’s Peak and in which are begun the two Mahayana lineages of the teachings of the profound insight of Voidness and the widespread action of Bodhicitta.
4. *The Lamp for the Pathway to Enlightenment (Bodhipāthapradīpa)* by Atisha is the forerunner for the “Lam-rim” or “Graded Path” literature. In it the two lineages begun with the *prajñā pāramitā Sūtras* are recombined.
5. Tsongkhapa refers here specifically to two of his forty-five spiritual masters, namely the Kargyu Lama Choekyob Zangpo, Most Learned Among the Monks, and the Nyingma Lama Namkha Gyaltsen from Lhobrag, through whom he received and recombined the three strands of Atisha’s “Lam-rim” lineage.
6. There are two desirable aims either for higher status with rebirth as a human or a god, or for the definite goodness of either Liberation, from suffering or Full Enlightenment as a Buddha.
7. The nine kinds of beings are derived from the fact that beings may be reborn from any one to any other of the Three Realms, for example from the Desire into the Desire, Form or Formless Realm and so forth.
8. The power-granting king is an epithet of the wish-granting gem, a fabulous jewel which grants all worldly wishes.

9. Buddha’s intended themes are renunciation., the Enlightened Motive of Bodhicitta and a correct view of Voidness.
10. The great mistake is to advance sectarian views, to discredit any of the Buddhist Schools, Vehicles or texts, and to disclaim the validity of Buddha’s teachings.
11. The initial level motivation is to work for a better rebirth as a human, or a god, out of fear of a lower rebirth. The intermediate level is to work for Liberation from cyclic existence, out of renunciation of your own suffering. The advanced levels to work for achieving the Full Enlightenment of a Buddha in order to be able to liberate all others from their suffering. This highest level, then, is the Bodhicitta motivation.
12. A yogi is someone who has joined himself to actual paths, here specifically ones that lead to Enlightenment.
13. The eight liberties for Dharma study are defined as freedom from the eight states of no leisure. Four of these are non-human states, namely birth in one of the hells, as a hungry ghost, an animal or as a long-lived god. The four human states of no leisure are birth in an uncivilised border region or among barbarians, birth where the words of Buddha are not present, or as a deaf and dumb cretin or instinctively holding distorted views.
14. The three unfortunate states of rebirth are as a hell creature, hungry ghost or animal.
15. The Three Jewels of Refuge are the Buddhas, their Dharma teachings and the Sangha assembly of those who realise them.
16. The eight ripened favourable qualities of a human rebirth most conducive for Dharma study and practice are having a long life, a handsome and healthy body, a good reputable family, with prosperity, honesty and credibility of speech, a strong influence on others, as a male and with a powerful body and mind.
17. The four opponent powers for cleansing yourself of black karmic debts are feeling sincere regret about your previously committed non-virtue and, secondly, invoking what you must rely on, namely the Three Jewels of Refuge and a Bodhicitta motivation. Third is your promise to turn away from ever committing such non-virtue again and fourth is the power of whatever virtuous actions you do to oppose your non-virtue.
18. The two collections are of merit and of insight, the former resulting in your attainment of the Form Bodies of a Buddha and the latter in the Wisdom Bodies or Dharmakaya.
19. The causal Mahayana Vehicle is that of Sutrayana.
20. The resultant Mahayana Vehicle is that of Tantrayana.