Texts for Meditation

Contents

The Three Principle Aspects of the Path	*3*
Eight-Verse Attitude-Training	*6*
Seven-Point Mind-Training	*8*
The Foundation for Good Qualities	*11*
A Bodhisattva's Garland of Gems	*15*
Seven-Limb Prayer of Shantideva	*19*
A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment	*21*
The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path	*32*

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The Three Principle Aspects of the Path

(Lam-gtso rnam-gsum)

by Je Tsongkhapa

translated by Alexander Berzin, 1983, revised 2003

I prostrate to my ennobling, impeccable lamas.

I shall try to explain, to the best of my ability,
The essential meaning of all the scriptural pronouncements
of the Triumphant Ones,
The path praised by the Triumphants' holy offspring,
The fording passage for the fortunate desiring liberation.

Listen with a clear (mind), O fortunate ones,
Whose minds would rely on the path pleasing to the Triumphant
Through being unattached to the pleasures of compulsive existence
And eager to make meaningful your life of respites and enriching factors.

Since taking keen interest in the pleasurable fruits
of the ocean of compulsive existence, without pure renunciation,
Is no method for (achieving) the peace (of liberation) –
In fact, by craving what is found in compulsive situations,
limited beings are completely bound –
First, strive for renunciation.

By accustoming your minds that there is no time to waste
When a life of respites and enrichments is so difficult to find,
Turn from your obsession with the appearances of this life.
By thinking over and again about the problems of recurring rebirth
And that (the laws of) behavioral cause and effect are never a fraud,
Turn from your obsession with the appearances of future (lives).

When, by accustoming yourself in this way, you never generate,
for even an instant,
A mind that aspires for the splendors of recurring samsara,
And you develop the attitude that day and night always is interested
keenly in liberation,
At that time, you have generated renunciation.

But since even this renunciation, if not held with the development
Of a pure bodhichitta aim, will not become a cause
For the splendors and bliss of a peerless purified state (of enlightenment),
Those with sense generate a supreme bodhichitta aim.

Carried by the currents of the four violent rivers,
Tied by the tight fetters of karma, hard to reverse,
Thrown into an iron-mesh pit of grasping for true identities,
Completely enshrouded in the heavy gloom of the darkness
of unawareness,

Unrelentingly tormented by the three types of suffering,
Life after life in limitless compulsive existence –
Having thought about the condition of your mothers
Who have found themselves in situations like these,
Develop a supreme bodhichitta aim.

Even if you have built up as habits renunciation and a bodhichitta aim,
Still, if you lack the discriminating awareness of realizing the abiding
nature of reality,
You will be unable to sever the root of your compulsive existence.
Therefore, make effort in the methods for realizing dependent arising.

Anyone who has seen that (the laws of) behavioral cause and effect
Regarding all phenomena of samsara and nirvana are never a fraud,
And who has had fall apart the sustaining supports of
his or her (cognitions)
Aimed (at inherent existence), whatever they might have been,
Has entered the path pleasing to the Buddhas.

Appearances are non-fraudulent dependent arisings
And voidness is parted from any assertions
(of impossible ways of existing).
So long as you have these two understandings appearing to you separately,
You still have not realized the Able Ones' intention.

But when, not in alternation, but all together at once,
Your certitude from the mere sight of non-fraudulent dependent arising
Causes all your ways of taking objects (as inherently existent) to fall apart,
You have completed discerning the correct view.

Further, when you know how appearance eliminates
the extreme of existence
And voidness eliminates the extreme of nonexistence,
And how voidness dawns as cause and effect,
You will never be stolen away by views that grasp for extremes.

When you have understood the points of these three
Principle aspects of the path, as they are,
Rely on solitude and, by generating the power of joyful perseverance,
Quickly realize, my child, your immemorial goal.

Je Tsongkhapa

Eight-Verse Attitude-Training

(Blo-sbyong tshig-brgyad-ma)

by Langri-tangpa (dGe-bshes gLang-ri thang-pa)

translated by Alexander Berzin
June 2001, revised February 2004

1
May I always cherish all limited beings
By considering how far superior they are
To wish-granting gems
For actualizing the supreme aim.

2
Whenever I come into anyone's company,
May I regard myself less than everyone else
And, from the depths of my heart, value others
More highly than I do myself.

3
Whatever I am doing, may I check the flow of my mind,
And the moment that disturbing emotions arise,
Since they debilitate myself and others,
May I confront and avert them with forceful means.

4
Whenever I see beings instinctively cruel,
Overpowered by negativities and serious problems,
May I cherish them as difficult to find
As discovering a treasure of gems.

5
When others, out of envy, treat me unfairly
With scolding, insults, and more,
May I accept the loss upon myself
And offer the victory to others.

6
Even if someone whom I have helped
And from whom I harbor great expectations
Were to harm me completely unfairly,
May I view him or her as a hallowed teacher.

7
In short, may I offer to all my mothers,
both actually and indirectly,
Whatever will benefit and bring them joy;
And may I hiddenly accept on myself
All my mothers' troubles and woes.

8

Through a mind untarnished by stains of conceptions
Concerning eight passing things, throughout all of this,
And that knows all phenomena as an illusion,
May I break free from my bondage, without any clinging.

Seven-Point Mind-Training

(Blo-sbyong don-bdun-ma)

by Geshe Chaykawa (dGe-bshes 'Chad-kha-ba)

Togmey-zangpo (Thogs-med bzang-po) edition
translated by Alexander Berzin, June 2004

Prostration to great compassion.

1
Train first in the preliminaries.

2
Ponder that phenomena are like a dream.
Discern the basic nature of awareness that has no arising.
The opponent itself liberates itself in its own place.
The essential nature of the path is to settle within a state
of the all-encompassing basis.
Between sessions, act like an illusory person.

Train in both giving and taking in alternation,
Mounting those two on the breath.
(In regard to) the three objects, (take) the three poisonous attitudes
And (give) the three roots of what's constructive,
(While) training with words in all paths of behavior.
As for the order of taking, start from myself.

3
When the environment and its dwellers are full of negative forces,
Transform adverse conditions into a path to enlightenment,
By banishing one thing as (bearing) all blame
And meditating with great kindness toward everyone.

Voidness, from meditating on deceptive appearances
As the four Buddha-bodies, is the peerless protector.

The supreme method entails four actions to use,
(So) instantly apply to meditation whatever I might happen to meet.

4
In brief, the essence of the guideline instructions
Is applying the five forces.

The guideline instruction for the Mahayana transference of mind
Is the five forces themselves,
While giving importance to my path of deportment.

5
If all my Dharma practice gathers into one intention
If, from the two witnesses, I take the main;
If I can continually rely on my mind being only happy;
And if even distracted I'm still able;
Then I've become trained.

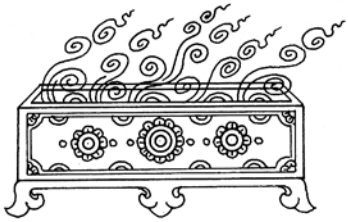
6
Train always in the three general points.
Transform my intentions, but remain normal.
Don't speak of (others') deficient or deteriorated sides.
Don't think anything about others' (faults).
Cleanse myself first of whichever disturbing emotion is my greatest.
Rid myself of hopes for fruits.
Give up poisoned food.
Don't rely (on my disturbing thoughts) as my excellent mainstay.
Don't fly off into bad play.
Don't lie in ambush.
Don't put (someone) down about a sensitive point.
Don't shift the load of a dzo to an ox.
Don't make a race.
Don't reverse the amulet.
Don't make a god fall to a demon.
Don't seek suffering (for others) as an adjunct for (my) happiness.

7
Do all yogas with one.
Do all the quashing of what's distorted with one.
At the beginning and the end, have the two actions.
Whichever of the two occurs, act patiently.
Safeguard the two at the cost of my life.
Train in the three difficult things.
Take the three major causes.
Meditate on the three undeclining things.
Possess the three inseparables.
Act purely, without partiality to objects.
Cherish (applying) wide and deep training toward everything.
Always meditate toward those set aside (as close).
Don't be dependent on other conditions.
Practice primarily now.
Don't have reversed understandings.
Don't be intermittent.
Train resolutely.

Free myself through both investigation and scrutiny.
Don't meditate with a sense of a loss.
Don't restrict myself with hypersensitivity.
Don't act for merely a short while.
Don't wish for (any) thanks.

(Like this,) transform into a path to enlightenment
This (time when) the five deteriorations are rampant.
This essence of nectar of guideline instructions
Is in lineage from Serlingpa.

From the awakening of karmic remainders
From having previously trained,
My admiration (for this practice) abounded.
And due to that cause,
Ignoring suffering and insult,
I requested the guideline teachings
To tame my self-grasping.
Now even if I die, I have no regrets.



The Foundation for Good Qualities

(Yon-tan gzhi-gyur-ma)

by Tsongkhapa (Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang grags-pa)

translated by Alexander Berzin, 1982, revised 2003

(Healthy) reliance on a kind spiritual master,
The foundation for all good qualities, is the root of the path.
Seeing this well, I request inspiration to rely
With great appreciation, through many endeavors.

This excellent working basis with its respites, found but once,
Is difficult to obtain. Having realized its great importance,
I request inspiration to develop without disruption
An attitude to take its essence in all ways, day and night.

At death, my body and life-force will perish quickly
Like bubbles on a moving stream. Remembering this
And having found stable certainty that after death,
The fruits of my noble and dark actions will follow behind,

Like a shadow to a body, I request inspiration always to take care
To rid myself of even the slightest, most minor action
That would build up a network of faults and to accomplish
Every possible deed that will build up a network of constructive force.

The splendors of compulsive existence, even when indulged in,
never suffice;
The gateway of all problems, they are unfit to make my mind secure.
Aware of these pitfalls, I request inspiration
To develop a great avid interest in liberation's bliss.

I request inspiration to take to heart, with mindfulness, alertness,
And great care, induced by this pure motivating thought,
The practices for individual liberation,
The root of the teachings,

Just as I have fallen into the ocean of compulsive existence,
So, too, have all wandering beings – they have been my mothers.
Seeing this, I request inspiration to grow to a supreme bodhichitta aim
To take responsibility to free these wandering beings.

Even if I have developed merely this resolve, if I lack the habit
Of the three types of ethical discipline, I will be unable to attain
A (supreme) purified state. Seeing this well, I request inspiration
To train with strong efforts in the bodhisattva vows.

I request inspiration quickly to develop on my mind-stream a path
That combines the pair: a stilled, settled mind and an exceptionally perceptive mind,
By stilling mental wandering toward objects of distortion
And properly discerning the correct meaning (of voidness).

When I have trained myself through the common paths
And become a vessel, I request inspiration easily to board
The Diamond-strong Vehicle, the supreme of all vehicles,
The sacred fording passage for those of good fortune.

Then, when I have found uncontrived certainty in what has been said,
That the foundation for realizing the two types of actual attainments
Is the closely bonding practices and vow restraints kept totally pure,
I request inspiration to uphold them even at the cost of my life.

Then, understanding correctly the essential points of the two stages
That are the essence of the tantra classes, I request inspiration
To actualize them in accord with the Holy One's enlightening speech,
Never straying from the conduct of four (daily) sessions of yoga.

I request inspiration for the feet of the spiritual mentors
Who indicate the excellent path like this
And of friends for proper practice to remain firm,
And for the masses of outer and inner interference to be stilled.

May I never be parted for all my lives from perfect gurus;
May I put to good use the all-around perfect Dharma;
And by achieving in full all good qualities of the stages and paths,
May I quickly attain a Vajradhara supreme state.

Je Tsongkhapa

Atisha

A Bodhisattva's Garland of Gems

(Byang-chub sems-dpa'i nor-bu'i phreng-ba, Skt. Bodhisattva-mani-avali)

by Atisha (Dipamkara Shrijnana)

translated by Alexander Berzin, 2004

I make prostration to great compassion.
I make prostration to the sublime teachers.
I make prostration to the Buddha-figures,
Those in whom to have belief.

1
Let me rid myself of all indecisive wavering
And cherish being wholeheartedly earnest in my practice.
So, let me rid myself fully of being sleepy, foggyminded, and lazy,
And always make effort with joyful perseverance.

2
Let me always safeguard the gateway of my senses
With mindfulness, alertness, and care.
So, let me check repeatedly the flow of my mind,
Three times each day and each night.

3
Let me make my own failings be known
And seek not mistakes in others.
So, let me keep my own good qualities hidden
And make the good qualities of others be known.

4
Let me rid myself of (desire for) material gain and honor
And always rid myself of (desire for) profit and fame.
So, let me have few desires, be content,
And show appreciation for the kind acts that've been done.

5
Let me meditate on love and compassion
And stabilize my bodhichitta aim.
So, let me rid myself of the ten destructive actions
And make myself stable, always, with belief in fact.

6
Let me overcome rage and pride
And come to have an attitude of humility.
So, let me rid myself of dishonest ways of living
And make my living with a livelihood that accords with the Dharma.

7
Let me rid myself of all material burdens
And adorn myself with an aryas' gems.
So, let me rid myself of all bustling activities
And live in seclusion.

8
Let me rid myself of idle words
And always restrain my speech.
So, when I see a sublime teacher or learned master,
Let me extend my service with respect.

9
As for persons with the eye of the Dharma
And limited beings who are beginners,
Let me expand my discernment
Of them as my teachers.

10
Whenever I see any limited beings,
Let me expand my discernment of them as my father,
my mother, my child or grandchild.
So, let me rid myself of misleading friends
And entrust myself to spiritual friends.

11
Let me rid myself of hostility and uneasy mental states,
And go happily everywhere.
So, let me rid myself of whatever I'm attached to
And live without attachments.

12
With attachment, I won't attain even a happy rebirth
And I'll cut off the life of my liberation, in fact.
So, wherever I see a Dharma measure (for bringing) happiness,
Let me exert effort always in that.

13
Whatever I've undertaken to start with,
Let me accomplish that very thing first.
Everything, this way, will get accomplished well;
Otherwise, neither will come about.

14
While still acting always negatively and parted from joy,
When a feeling of superiority arises about anything,
Let me cut off my pride and remember
My sublime teacher's guideline instructions.

15
And when a feeling of discouragement arises,
Let me praise the glories of the mind
And meditate on the voidness of both (states).

16
Whenever an object of attachment or hostility arises in any situation,
Let me regard it like an illusion or a projection;
Whenever I hear unpleasant words,
Let me regard them like an echo;
And whenever harm happens to my body,
Let me regard it as (coming from) my previous karma.

17
Let me step up to living in a sequestered place,
Outside the limits (of any town),
And, like a corpse of a dead game animal,
Hide myself in solitude and live without attachments.

18
(There,) let me always be stable with my Buddha-figure
And whenever a feeling of laziness or exhaustion arises,
Let me enumerate my own shortcomings
And remind myself of the essential points of taming behavior.

19
But if I happen to see others,
Let me speak calmly, gently, and sincerely,
Rid myself of any frowns or closed-off expressions,
And always keep a smile.

20
And when I'm continually seeing others,
Let me not be miserly, but take joy in giving,
And rid myself of all envy.

21
In order to safeguard the minds of others,
Let me rid myself of all contention
And always have patient tolerance.

22
Let me not be fawning, nor fickle in friendship,
But rather always stay faithful.
Let me rid myself of insulting others,
And keep a respectful manner.
Then, when imparting guideline instructions to others,
Let me have compassion and a mind to help.

23

Let me never deny the Dharma and,
Setting my intention on whichever ones I fervently admire,
Let me make effort to split my days and nights
(Passing) through the gateways of the ten Dharma acts.

24

Let me dedicate to great peerless enlightenment
As many constructive acts as I've amassed throughout the three times,
And extend out to limited beings my positive force.
So, let me always offer the great prayer
Of the seven-part practice.

25

Doing like that, let me complete my two networks
of positive force and deep awareness,
And deplete my two obscurations as well.
Thus, making my attainment of a human body meaningful,
Let me attain a peerless enlightenment.

26

The gem of belief in fact, the gem of ethical self-discipline,
The gem of generosity, the gem of listening,
The gems of care for how my actions reflect on others
and of moral self-dignity,
And the gem of discriminating awareness make seven.

27

These sacred gems
Are the seven gems that will never deplete.
They must not be mentioned to quasi-humans.

28

When in the midst of many,
Let me keep a check on my speech;
When remaining alone,
Let me keep a check on my mind.

Notes:

Verse 23:

The ten Dharma acts (chos-spyod rnam-bcu) are (1) copying scriptures, (2) making offerings to the Three Gems, (3) giving to the poor and sick, (4) listening to teachings, (5) reading scriptures, (6) taking to heart the essence of the teachings through meditating, (7) explaining the teachings, (8) reciting sutras, (9) thinking about the meaning of the texts, and (10) meditating single-pointedly on the meaning of the teachings.

Seven-Limb Prayer of Shantideva

translated by Alexander Berzin, 2004.

If we wish, we may then recite the verses from Shantideva that cover these seven points, together with the verses beforehand for setting the motivation and the verses afterwards of the mandala offering:

I take safe direction, till my purified state,
From the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Highest Assembly.
By the positive force of my giving and so on,
May I actualize Buddhahood to help those who wander.

May the surface of the land in every direction
Be pure, without even a pebble,
As smooth as the palm of a child's hand,
Naturally polished, as is a beryl gem.

May divine and human objects of offering,
Actually arrayed and those envisioned
As peerless clouds of Samantabhadra offerings,
Completely fill the sphere of space.

1
I prostrate to all the Buddhas who have graced the three times,
To the Dharma and to the Highest Assembly,
Bowing down with bodies as numerous
As all the atoms of the world.

2
Just as Manjushri and others
Have made offerings to the Triumphant,
So do I make offerings to the Accordingly Progressed
And to our Guardians, their Spiritual Offspring.

3
From beginningless samsara, in this and other lives,
I have unwittingly committed destructive acts,
Or caused others to do likewise,
Bewildered by the confusion of naivety.
I have even rejoiced in all this.
Seeing these mistakes, I openly declare them
To you, our Guardians, from the depth of my heart.

4
With happiness I rejoice at the ocean of virtues
of developing bodhichitta,
Wishing to bring joy to all limited beings
And working for everyone's sake.

5
With hands pressed together,
I request the Buddhas of all directions
To light the lamp of Dharma for those who are groping
In the darkness of suffering.

6
Triumphant Ones, wishing to pass beyond sorrow,
I beseech you with hands pressed together:
These beings wander blindly with no one to guide them;
Please live for eons beyond all count.

7
By the positive force built up
From all I have done in this way,
May all sufferings
Of every limited being disappear.

By directing and offering to the Buddha-fields
This base, anointed with fragrant waters, strewn with flowers,
And decked with Mount Meru, four islands, a sun, and a moon,
May all those who wander be led to pure lands.
Om idam guru ratna mandala-kam nir-yatayami.
I send forth this mandala to you precious gurus.

A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

(Byang-chub lam-gyi sgron-ma, Skt. Bodhipathapradipam)

by Dipamkara Shrijnana Atisha

translated by Alexander Berzin, 1980
in accordance with an explanation by Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche
following the commentary by the First Panchen Lama;
revised January 2003

I prostrate to the Bodhisattva Youthful Manjushri.

Promise to Compose

1
Having prostrated most respectfully to all the Triumphant
of the three times,
To their Dharma and to the Sangha community,
I shall light a lamp for the path to enlightenment,
Having been urged by my excellent disciple, Jangchub-wo

2
Since practitioners come to have small, intermediate, and supreme scopes,
They are known as the three types of spiritual persons.
I shall therefore write about these specific divisions,
Clarifying their defining features.

Initial Scope

3
Anyone who takes keen interest in himself or herself
Achieving, by some means, merely the happiness
Of uncontrollably recurring samsara
Is known as a person of minimum spiritual scope.

Intermediate Scope

4
Anyone with the nature to turn his or her back
on the pleasures of compulsive existence
And to turn back negative impulses of karma,
And who takes keen interest in merely his or her own state of peace,
Is known as a person of intermediate spiritual scope.

Bodhichitta as the Entranceway for the Advanced Scope

5
Anyone who fully wishes to eliminate completely
All the sufferings of others
As the sufferings included in his or her own mental continuum
Is someone of supreme motivation.

6
For these hallowed beings
Who have come to wish for supreme enlightenment,
I shall explain the perfect methods
That the gurus have shown.

The Ritual for Aspiring Bodhichitta, Together with Advice

7
Before paintings, statues, and so on of fully enlightened Buddhas,
As well as stupas and hallowed Dharma texts,
Offer flowers, incense,
And whatever material things you may have.

8
Also with the seven-limb offering mentioned in
The Prayer of Excellent Conduct,
With the mind never to turn back until
The ultimate realization of your Buddha-essence,

9
With supreme belief in the Three Supreme Gems,
With bent knee touching the ground
And palms pressed together,
Firstly, take safe direction three times.

10
Next, with a mind of love toward all limited beings as a start,
Look to all wandering beings, baring none,
Suffering from birth and so forth in the three worse realms,
And from death, transference, and so on.

11
Then, with the wish that all wandering beings
Be liberated from the suffering of pain,
From suffering, and from the causes of suffering,
Generate pledged bodhichitta with which you will never turn back.

12
The benefits of generating aspiring minds like this
Have been thoroughly explained
By Maitreya in
The Sutra Spread Out Like a Tree Trunk.

13
When you have read this sutra
or heard from your guru concerning this,
And have become aware of the boundless benefits
of full bodhichitta,
Then as a cause for making it stable
Generate this mind over and again.

14
The positive force of this is shown extensively
In The Sutra Requested by Viradatta.
As it is summarized there in merely three stanzas,
Let me quote them here.

15
"If the positive force
Of bodhichitta had form,
It would fill completely the sphere of space
And go beyond even that.

16
Although someone may totally fill with gems
Buddha-fields equal in number
To the grains of sand on the Ganges
And offer them to the Guardians of the World,

17
Yet should anyone press his or her palms together
And direct his or her mind toward bodhichitta,
His or her offering would be more specially noble;
It would have no end."

18
Having generated the aspiring states of bodhichitta,
Ever enhance them with many efforts;
And, to be mindful of it in this and other lives too,
Thoroughly safeguard as well the trainings explained in the texts.

Taking the Vows for Engaged Bodhichitta

19
Except through the vows that are the very nature of engaged bodhichitta,
Your pure aspiration will never come to increase.
Therefore, with the wish to progress toward aspired full enlightenment,
Take them definitely on, energetically for that sake.

20
Those who maintain at all times other vows
From any of the seven classes for individual liberation
Have the proper share for the bodhisattva vows;
Others do not.

21
As for the seven classes for individual liberation,
The Accordingly Progressed has asserted in his explanations
That those of glorious abstinence are supreme;
And those are the vows for fully ordained monks.

22
Through the ritual well expounded in
The "Ethical Discipline Chapter" of The Bodhisattva Stages
Take the bodhisattva vows
From an excellent, fully qualified guru.

23
Know that an excellent guru is someone who
Is skilled in the vow ceremony,
By nature lives by the vows,
Has the confidence to confer the vows,
And possesses compassion.

24
However, if you have made effort in this
And have been unable to find such a guru,
There is a ritual other than that for receiving the vows,
Which I shall explain in full.

25
Concerning this, I shall write here very clearly
How Manjushri generated bodhichitta in previous times
When he was King Ambaraja,
Just as is explained in The Sutra of
An Adornament for Manjushri's Buddha-Field.

26
"Before the eyes of my Guardians,
I generate bodhichitta
And, inviting all wandering beings as my guests,
I shall liberate them from uncontrollable rebirth.

27
From now until my attainment
Of a supreme purified state,
I shall never act with harmful intentions,
An angered mind, miserliness, or jealousy.

28
I shall live according to abstinent behavior;
I shall rid myself of negativities and attachment/greed.
Taking joy in the vows of ethical discipline,
I shall continually train myself as the Buddhas have done.

29
I shall take no delight in attaining enlightenment
By a speedy means for my own self,
But shall remain until the end of the future,
If it be a cause for helping one limited being.

30
I shall cleanse everything into
Immeasurable, inconceivable realms
And remain everywhere in the ten directions
For those who have called my name.

31
I shall purify all the actions
Of my body and speech,
And purify as well the actions of my mind:
I shall never commit any destructive acts."

Practicing Bodhisattva Conduct

Training in Higher Ethical Discipline

32
If you train yourself well in the three trainings of ethical discipline
By living in accord with the vows that are the very nature
of engaged bodhichitta
And which are a cause for purifying completely your
body, speech, and mind,
Your respect for the three trainings in ethical discipline will increase.

33
Through this will come the completely purified, full state of enlightenment;
For, by exerting yourself in the vows of the bodhisattva vows,
You will fully complete the networks needed
For total enlightenment.

Training in Higher Concentration

34
As for the cause that will fully complete these networks
Having the nature of positive force and deep awareness,
All the Buddhas have asserted that it is
The development of advanced awareness.

35
Just as a bird without fully developed wings
Cannot fly in the sky,
Likewise lacking the force of advanced awareness,
You will be unable to fulfill the aims of limited beings.

36
Whatever positive force is had in a day and a night
By someone possessing advanced awareness
Is not had even in a hundred lifetimes
By someone lacking advanced awareness.

37
Therefore, if you would wish to fully complete,
Quickly, the networks for total enlightenment,
Make effort and thereby come to attain
Advanced awareness. It is not to be had by the lazy.

38
Someone who has not achieved a stilled settled mind
Will not attain advanced awareness.
Therefore, repeatedly exert effort
To actualize a stilled settled mind.

39
However, should the factors for a stilled settled mind be weak,
Then even if you have meditated with great effort
And even if for thousands of years,
You will not attain single-minded concentration.

40
Therefore, maintain well the factors mentioned
In the chapter on A Network for Single-Minded Concentration.
Then place your mind on something constructive:
One appropriate object of focus.

41
When a yogi actualizes a stilled settled mind,
He or she attains as well advanced awareness.

Training in Higher Discriminating Awareness

However, if you have failed to apply yourself
to far-reaching discriminating awareness,
You will be unable to deplete the obscurations.

42
Therefore, in order to rid yourself of all obscurations, without exception,
Regarding the disturbing emotions and knowable phenomena,
Always meditate on the yoga of far-reaching discriminating awareness
Together with methods.

43
This is because discriminating awareness lacking methods
As well as methods lacking discriminating awareness
Have been said still to be .
Therefore, never abandon having both.

44
To get rid of doubts concerning
What is discriminating awareness and what are methods,
I shall clarify the actual division
Between methods and discriminating awareness.

45
The Triumphant One has explained that
Leaving aside far-reaching discriminating awareness,
All networks of constructive factors,
Such as far-reaching generosity and so forth, are the methods.

46
It is by the power of having meditated on the methods that,
Through meditating thoroughly on something
with discriminating awareness,
Someone with a bodhichitta nature can quickly attain enlightenment.
It does not come about by having meditated on the lack
of inherent identity alone.

47
Awareness of the voidness of inherent existence
That has come to realize that the aggregates, cognitive spheres,
And cognitive stimulators lack inherently existent arising
Has been fully explained as discriminating awareness.

48
If things inherently existed at the time of their causes,
it would be illogical for them to have to arise.
Further, if they inherently did not exist at all they could not
be made to arise, like a flower out of space.
Moreover, because there would be the absurd conclusions of
both these faults,
Things do not come about from being both inherently
existent and nonexistent at the time of their causes either.

49
Phenomenal things do not arise from themselves,
Nor from something inherently different, nor from both.
Neither do they arise from no causes at all.
Because of this, everything by nature lacks inherent existence.

50
Furthermore, when you analyze all things
If they are inherently one or many,
Then since you cannot be aimed at anything that has existence
from its own nature,
You can become certain of the nonexistence of inherent existence.

51
Furthermore, the lines of reasoning in The Seventy Stanzas on Voidness
And from The Root Text on the Middle Way and so forth
Explain as well how the nature of phenomenal things
Is established as voidness.

52
However, because this text would have become too long,
I have therefore not elaborated here.
What I have explained has been for the purpose of meditation
On merely a proven system of philosophical tenets.

53
Thus, since you cannot be aimed at the inherent existence
Of any thing, without exception,
Meditation on the lack of inherent identity
Is meditation on discriminating awareness.

54
With discriminating awareness, an inherent nature
Of any phenomenon is never seen;
And it is explained that the same is true regarding the actuality
of discriminating awareness itself.
In this way meditate on voidness nonconceptually.

55
This compulsive existence which comes from conceptual thoughts of
inherent existence
Has a true nature merely fabricated by these conceptual thoughts.
Therefore, the state of being rid of all these conceptual thoughts,
without an exception,
Is the supreme Nirvana State Beyond Sorrow.

56
Like this as well, the Vanquishing Master Surpassing All has said,
"Conceptual thought of inherent existence is great unawareness,
That which makes you fall into the ocean of uncontrollably
recurring existence.
By abiding in single-minded concentration devoid of conceptual thought
of inherent existence,
You will make clear the mind that is without these conceptions
just as is space."

57
Also, from The Dharani Formula for Engaging in the Nonconceptual, he
has said,
"If the Offspring of the Triumphant involved in this pure Dharma practice
Were to contemplate this state of no conceptual thoughts
of inherent existence,
They would transcend these conceptual thoughts which
are difficult to pass through
And would gradually attain the state of no such conceptions."

58
When you have become certain, by these quotations and lines of reasoning,
That all things are devoid of inherent existence
And without an inherently existent arising,
Meditate in a state of no conceptual thoughts of inherent existence.

Manifesting the Result

59
When you have meditated on actuality like this
And have gradually attained the heat stage and so forth,
You will then attain the stage of extremely joyous one and so on,
And the enlightenment of Buddhahood will not be far.

60
If, however, through actions such as pacifying,
Stimulating, and so forth, attained from the force of mantras
And through the power as well of the eight great actual attainments
and so on,
Such as actualization of an excellent vase and so forth,

61
And through a blissful awareness, you wish to fully complete
The enlightenment-building networks,
And if you wish also to practice the actions of the secret mantras
Discussed in the kriya, charya, and so forth classes of tantra,

62
Then, in order to be conferred the vajra master empowerment,
Please your hallowed guru by all such things
As respectful service, giving him precious substances, and so on,
And doing what he says.

63
By being conferred the complete vajra master empowerment
From having pleased your guru,
You will purify yourself completely of all negative forces
And, in nature, become endowed with the proper share to achieve the actual attainments.

64
Because it has been strictly prohibited
From The Great Tantra of the Primordial Buddha,
The secret and discriminating awareness empowerments
Are not to be conferred or received in a literal fashion by those who are abstinent.

65
If you were to take these empowerments so conferred
While living according to the ascetic practice of abstinence,
You would be committing prohibited actions
And because of that, your vows of asceticism would degenerate.

66
In other words, as a practitioner of tamed behavior
You would contract the downfalls of total defeats
And since you would definitely fall to one of the worse rebirth states,
You would never have any attainments.

67
However, if you have received in a nonliteral fashion
The conferral of the vajra master empowerment and are aware of actuality,
There is no fault in your actions of listening to all the tantras, explaining them,
Performing fire pujas, making offering pujas, and so forth.

I, the Elder Shri Dipamkara, having seen everything to be as is explained from the Dharma teachings of the sutras and so on, and having been requested by Jangchub-wo, have composed this abbreviation of the explanation of the path to enlightenment.

This concludes A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment composed by the Great Master Dipamkara Shrijnana. It was translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian Abbot himself Dipamkara Shrijnana and the Tibetan translator monk Geway-lodro. This Dharma text was composed at the Toling Temple in Zhang-zhung.

The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path

(Lam-rim bsdus-don)

by Je Tsongkhapa

translated by Alexander Berzin,
Berlin, Germany, January 2001

(1) I prostrate before you, Foremost of the Shakya Clan.
Your body is born from a host of positive actions and splendid attainments,
Your speech grants the wishes of limitless beings.
Your mind sees all knowables just as they are.

(2) I prostrate before you, Maitreya and Manjushri,
Supreme spiritual sons of this peerless Teacher.
Accepting the mantle (to enact) the full set of Triumphant Ones' deeds,
You display emanations in countless worlds.

(3) Before your feet, I prostrate, Nagarjuna and Asanga,
(Gems) adorning the Southern Continent.
Celebrated throughout the Three Realms,
You have commented on the most difficult to fathom
Mother of the Triumphant (The Prajnaparamita Sutra),
In perfect accord with its intended meaning.

(4) I bow before you, Dipamkara (Atisha),
Holder of a fortune of instructions,
Which encapsulate in full and without a mistake,
The essential points of the paths of profound view and extensive behavior,
In excellent lineage from these two outstanding pioneers.

(5) Respectfully, I prostrate before you, my spiritual mentors,
Eyes for beholding all the infinite scriptures,
Superlative ford for the fortunate to cross to liberation.
You clarify everything through skillful means,
prompted by your loving-concern.

(6) The stages of the path to enlightenment have passed down intact
Through successive generations from Nagarjuna and Asanga,
The crown jewels of all erudite masters of the Southern Continent,
And the banner of whose fame flies gloriously
above the wandering masses.
As (following the stages) can fulfill, without an exception,
The desired spiritual aims of the nine types of rebirth,
They constitute a power- granting king of precious instruction.

Because they gather within them the streams of myriad excellent classics,
They comprise a veritable ocean of all-around perfect, correct explanation.

(7) You understand all Buddha's teachings with no contradictions.
The scriptural pronouncements, without an exception,
    dawn on your mind as personal guidelines.
You easily discover the Triumphant One's intended meanings.
They protect you from the abyss of the great misdeed
    (of forsaking the Dharma).
Because of these (benefits), what scrutinizing persons among the erudite
    masters of India and Tibet
Will not have their minds enraptured by the stages of the path of three
    spiritual scopes,
The supreme instructions to which many fortunate ones have
    relied upon fully.

(8) Although (positive potential accrues) from reciting or
    hearing even once
(Atisha's) manner (of text) that fully encompasses
The essential points of all scriptural pronouncements,
Even greater waves of massive benefit, for certain, build up
From actually teaching or studying the sacred Dharma (contained within).
Therefore, consider the points (for doing this properly).

(9) A healthy relation, (worked on) with effort in thought and action,
With a holy spiritual mentor who indicates the path
Is the root most appropriate for the dependent arising
Of the hugest networks (of potential and awareness) for this
    and future lives.
Seeing this, then (having taken the safe direction of refuge),
Please (your mentors) by offering practice
That accords with their enlightening words,
Which you would not forsake even at the cost of your life.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama (Tsongkhapa) has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(10) This working basis (of a human life) with (eight) respites
Is far more precious than a wish- granting gem.
(A rebirth) like this is gained perhaps only once.
Hard to acquire and easily lost, (it passes in a flash) like lightning in the sky.
Considering (your precious human life) in these ways
And realizing that (engaging in) any worldly activities

Is like trying to winnow (something meaningful from) chaff,
You must try to take the essence of life at all times, day and night.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(11) After death, there is no assurance of avoiding one of the
worse rebirth forms.
Yet, it is certain that the Three Supreme Gems provide safe direction away
from any dread (of this fate).
For these reasons, be extremely steadfast in taking their
safe direction in life
And unrelenting in following their points for training.
(Success in not falling) further depends on considering well
Which types of impulsive behavior are noble or dark, and what are their
results,
Then living by adopting (the former) and avoiding (the latter).

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(12) The fullest strides in actualizing the supreme paths
will not come about
Until attaining as a working basis (a precious human life) with a full set of
(eight) definitional factors.
Therefore, train in their causal (constructive acts),
So that you will not be lacking in any of these (factors).
As it is utterly essential to cleanse your three channels
Of tarnishes from stains of negative potentials and from downfalls
(from vows),
And especially (to purge them of) obstacles from karma,
Cherish healthy and continual reliance on a full set of four opponent forces.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(13) Without working hard at pondering true problems and their draw-
backs,
You will not properly gain keen interest in liberation (from them).
Without considering the stages whereby (true) origins
of suffering like that.

If you too draw you into samsara,
You will not see the means for cutting the root of this vicious circle.
Therefore, relish knowing the factors that bind you to this wheel,
Exuding disgust, and becoming determined to leave such existence.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(14) Developing and enhancing bodhichitta is the bedrock for the Supreme Vehicle's paths.
It is the basis and foundation for great waves of enlightening conduct.
Like an elixir for transmuting into gold, (it transfigures into enlightening features) all aspects of the two networks (of potentials and awareness).
It (builds up, day and night) a treasure of positive potential,
Amassed from an endless array of constructive acts.
Realizing this, bodhisattvas take this supreme precious mind as their innermost bond.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(15) Total willingness to give is the wish-granting gem for fulfilling the hopes of wandering beings.
It is the sharpest weapon to sever the knot of stinginess.
It leads to bodhisattva conduct that enhances self-confidence and courage,
And is the basis for universal proclamation of your fame and repute.
Realizing this, the wise rely, in a healthy manner, on the outstanding path
Of (being ever-willing) to offer completely their bodies, possessions, and positive potentials.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(16) Ethical discipline is the water to wash away the stains of misdeeds.
It is the ray of moonlight to cool the scorching heat of disturbing emotions.
(With it, you stand out) amidst the nine kinds of beings, radiant like a Mount Meru.
By its power, you bend all beings (to your positive influence) without (need for) mesmerizing stares.
Realizing this, the holy ones safeguard, as they would their eyes,
The vowed discipline that they have accepted purely.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(17) Patience (not to become angry or upset) is the best adornment for
those holding power,
And the perfect ascetic practice for those tormented
by disturbing emotions.
It is the high-soaring eagle as the enemy of the snake of hostility,
And the thickest armor against the sharp weapons of abusive words.
Realizing this, (the wise) accustom themselves, in various ways and forms,
To (wearing) the padding of supreme patience.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(18) Once you suit up with the armor of resolute,
unswayable positive enthusiasm,
Your proficiency in scriptural understanding and in realization grow full
like the waxing moon.
Your entire mode of behavior takes on meaningful purpose,
And you bring whatever you start to its intended conclusion.
Realizing this, bodhisattvas exert great waves of positive enthusiasm,
Washing away all laziness.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(19) Mental constancy is the king wielding power over the mind.
When you fix it, it remains immovable like a mighty Mount Meru.
When you project it, it fully engages in any constructive aim.
It induces the exhilarating bliss of feeling physically and mentally fit.
Realizing this, yogis with (mental) control continuously rely on absorbed
concentration, in a healthy manner,
Overcoming their enemy, mental distraction.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(20) Discriminating awareness is the eye for beholding
profound (voidness),
the actual way (in which everything exists).
It is the pathway of mind for extracting the root of compulsive existence.
It is the treasure of genius praised in all the scriptural pronouncements
And is renowned as the most brilliant lamp for dispelling
the darkness of naivety.
Realizing this, those who are wise and who wish liberation
Make every effort to enhance this pathway- mind.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(21) Single-pointed constancy of mind, on its own, lacks the perception
That is able to sever the root of samsara.
Discriminating awareness, parted from a stilled
and settled pathway of mind,
Cannot reverse disturbing emotions and attitudes,
No matter how much it analytically discerns.
But, when the discriminating awareness that can be totally decisive
about how things exist
Mounts the horse of an unwaveringly stilled and settled mind,
And, with the lance of Madhyamaka logic, devoid of extremes,
Analytically discerns (voidness) correctly, destroying all underlying assumptions that would support any grasping for extremist views,
That wide-ranging discriminating awareness expands the intelligence
So that it realizes the actual way (in which everything exists).

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(22) Mentally abiding on how everything exists, unwaveringly,
with total stability,
While also (applying) the individualizing inspection that analytically
discerns (voidness) correctly --
What need to mention that it actualizes absorbed concentration through
habituation with single-pointedness of mind,
It increasingly enhances that absorbed concentration.
Those who, seeing this, enthusiastically work to actualize a state of mind
That is jointly stilled and settled and exceptionally perceptive are truly
remarkable.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(23) Having meditated both on space- like voidness
during total absorption
And on illusion-like voidness as the subsequent realization,
Combining the two as awareness and method
Is acclaimed as "going to the far shore of bodhisattva conduct."
From this realization, being discontent with (achieving)
a one-sided pathway of mind
Is the tradition of those with good fortune (to attain enlightenment).

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(24) The causal and resultant Mahayana vehicles travel in common
These pathways of mind as requirements for (reaching)
the supreme pathway (enlightenment).
The more that you increasingly enhance these (stages of the path),
The more your attainment of (rebirth with) respites and endowments
Becomes meaningful and effective (for reaching enlightenment)
By depending on navigational guidance from tantric masters,
Embarking on the vast ocean of tantra,
And healthily relying on their full guideline instructions.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

(25) In order to accustom my mind (to these stages of the path)
And also to benefit others of good fortune,
I have explained here in easily understandable words
The complete path that is pleasing to the Buddhas.
I pray that, by this constructive act, may all limited beings
Never be parted from this pure and excellent path.

The Ever-Vigilant Lama has offered prayers like that.
If you would also seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself 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 Namgyel Monastery on the Great Drog Mountain (Tibet) by the Buddhist monk, (Tsongkhapa) Lozang-dragpa, a meditator who has heard many teachings.