

[The following selections consists of the first part of the *Song of My Spiritual Life* (Nyam mgur) of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419). This text is also known as *The Short Book on the Steps of the Path* (*Lam rim bsdus don*). Accompanying the verses of Je Tsongkapa's root text is a commentary called *Illumination of the Essence* (*Snying po mdor bsdus gsal ba*), composed by Choney Lama Drakpa Shedrup (1675-1748).]

*, , LAM RIM BSDUS DON GYI TSIG 'GREL SNYING PO MDOR BSDUS GSAL
BA ZHES BYA BA BZHUGS SO, ,

Herein is contained the
Brief Illumination of the Essence,
a word-by-word commentary on the
Short Book on the Steps of the Path.

*, , NA MO SU MA TI K'A RTI YE,

I bow down to Sumatikirti.

,THUGS BSKYED MGYOGS 'GRO'I SHUGS KYIS NYER DRANGS PA'I,
,GZHAN PHAN 'PHRIN LAS 'GRO BA'I DPAL DU SHAR, ,SKAL LDAN PAD
MO YONGS KYI GNYEN GCIG PO, ,THUB DBANG SMRA BA'I NYI MA DE
LA 'DUD,

I bow down to the sun, the teacher, the Lord of the Able,
The one and only friend of all fortunate lotus flowers,
Whose holy activities rise with glory to benefit others
Pulled by the swift horse of His exalted bodhichitta!

,BLO CHEN GZHAN GYIS SHIN TU DPAG DKA' BA'I, ,ZAB DON LEGS PAR
'GREL BA'I RNAM DPYOD KYIS, ,BZANG PO'I MDZAD MCHOOG GRAGS PA'I
SNANG BA CAN, ,RJE BTZUN BLA MA'I ZHABS LA GUS PHYAG 'TSAL,

With reverence I bow down at the feet of my holy Lama,
Who analyzes and excellently comments upon the profound meanings
Which other great *minds* find difficult to fathom.
Such supremely *good* activities cause you to shine with *fame*!

,GANG DE'I LEGS PAR BSHAD PA'I MTHAR THUG NI, ,BYANG CHUB LAM
GYI RIM PA ZHES GRAGS PA, ,DE YI GNAD KUN GCIG TU RAB BSGRIL PA,
,LAM RIM BSDUS PA'I DGONGS DON GSAL BAR BYA,

I shall illuminate the true intent of the *Short Steps of the Path*,
That very quintessence of your excellent explanations
Which combines in one, each and every crucial point
Of that known as the "steps of the path to enlightenment."

,DE LA 'DIR BDAG CAG GI BLA MA CHOS KYI RGYAL PO BTZONG KHA PA
CHEN POS MDZAD PA'I NYAMS MGUR RAM, LAM RIM BSDUS PA'I DON
NI GANG BSHAD PAR BYA BA'I CHOS SO, 'DI LA GSUM, SNGON 'GRO
MCHOD BRJOD SOGS DANG , DNGOS GZHI GZHUNG DON DANG , MJUG
GI BSHAD PA'I KHYAD PAR RO, , DANG PO LA GNYIS, MCHOD PAR
BRJOD PA DANG , BSHAD BYA NGOS BZUNG BA'O,

Here I am going to explain the *Song of My Spiritual Life*, also known as the *Short Book on the Steps of the Path*, composed by your and my Lama, the King of the Dharma, the great Tsongkapa. My explanation will be in three divisions: first the preliminaries of the offering of praise and the other preparatory steps, then the meaning of the actual body of the text, and lastly some concluding details.

THE PRELIMINARIES

The preliminary division of my text has two parts of its own: the offering of praise, and an identification of that which is to be explained.

OFFERING OF PRAISE

` , , NA MO GU RU MNYDZU GUO sh'A YA,

I bow down to Guru Manjushri.

,DANG PO LA'ANG GNYIS TE, DANG PO NI, LA LAR NA MO GU RU
MNYDZU GUO sh'A YA, ZHES 'BYUNG BA NI SLA'O,

The offering of praise is in two sections. First is the line "I bow down to Guru Manjushri," which appears in some editions of the text. Its meaning is easy to understand.

Prostration to the Lord of the Able Ones

,GNYIS PA LA LNGA LAS, DANG PO THUB DBANG LA PHYAG 'TSAL BA

NI, PHUN TSOGS DGE LEGS BYE BAS BSKRUN PA'I SKU, , ZHES SOGS
RKANG PA BZHI STE,

The second section of the offering of praise is contained in five points. The first is an obeisance to the Lord of the Able Ones which is expressed in the first four lines of the root text which begins "To His exalted body born from perfect complete goodness and millions of virtues."

,PHUN TSOGS DGE LEGS BYE BAS BSKRUN PA'I SKU, ,MTHA' YAS 'GRO
BA'I RE BA SKONG BA'I GSUNG , ,MA LUS SHES BYA JI BZHIN GZIGS PA'I
THUGS, ,SH'AKYA'I GTZO BO DE LA MGOS PHYAG 'TSAL,

(1)

**To His Exalted body
born from perfect complete goodness
and millions of virtues,**

**To His exalted speech
which fulfills the hopes
of infinite living beings,**

**To His exalted mind
which sees each and every
knowable thing just as it is,**

**To the Prince of the Shakyas,
with my head
I bow down.**

'DI LA MKHYEN BRTZE NUS GSUM MAM, SPANGS RTOGS KYI YON TAN
SPYI DANG , BYE BRAG SKU'I YON TAN GYI DBANG DU BYAS NA, MTSAN
DANG DPE BYAD SOGS YON TAN DU MAS KHYAD PAR DU BYAS PA DE
NI, RGYU GANG LAS 'KHRUNGS PA YOD DE, BSOD NAMS DANG YE SHES
KYIS BSDUS PA PHUN SUM TSOGS PA'I DGE LEGS RE RE TZAM MA YIN
PAR BYE BAS BSKRUN PA STE BSKYED PA YIN PA'I PHYIR RO,

The general good qualities of the Buddha are the three of His knowledge, love, and power; and also those things which He has realized and those which He has abandoned. However, if we were to restrict ourselves to the good qualities of *His*

exalted body alone, it is His major and minor marks which set Him apart. There are certain causes which produce these great qualities—they are *born from millions of instances of goodness and virtue*. They are not produced by merely some isolated occasions of this goodness and virtue, but rather by their *perfect completion*, which is subsumed under the accumulations of merit and wisdom.

,DIR BYE BA ZHES PA NI, MANG TSIG YIN GYI, GRANGS KYI BYE BA TZAM LA MI BZUNG NGO , , MTSAN DPE RE RE LA RGYU JI TZAM DGOS PA NI, RIN CHEN 'PHRENG BA LAS GSAL LA, RGYU SO SO BA RE RE' I DBANG DU BYAS PA NI, YUM GYI MDO SOGS DANG , MNGON RTOGS RGYAN NA'ANG YOD DO, , GSUNG GI YON TAN LA NGO BO' I DBANG DU BYAS NA'ANG RUNG LA 'BRAS BU' I DBANG DU BYAS NA, DE BZHIN GSHEGS PA' I GSUNG GI YON TAN NAM BYED LAS YOD DE, GRANGS MTHA' YAS PA' I 'GRO BA' I GNAS SKABS DANG MTHAR THUG GI RE BA SKONG BAR BYED PA' I PHYIR RO,

Here the word "million" does not necessarily refer specifically to the exact number one million, but is used rather to express a great quantity. If you are interested in the exact kinds of causes which go into each major and minor mark, that is clarified in *The String of Precious Jewels*. Such works as the *Mother Sutras*, as well as the *Ornament of Realizations*, go through their each and every cause individually.

,RE BA SKONG TSUL YANG , CHOS BSTAN NAS MNGON MTHO DANG NGES LEGS LA BKOD PA' I SGO NAS PHAN 'DOGS PA DANG , DE DANG DE' I SKABS KYI THE TSOM GCOD PA LA BYA' O, , THUGS KYI YON TAN GYI KHYAD PAR YOD DE, NGO BO' I DBANG DU BYAS NA MA LUS JI LTA JI SNYED KYI SHES BYA THAMS CAD JI BZHIN MNGON SUM DU GZIGS PA' I PHYIR RO, , DE LTA BU' I SKU GSUNG THUGS KYI YON TAN DANG LDAN PA, SH'AKYA' I RIGS KYI GTZO BO SH'AKYA THUB PA DE LA JI LTAR PHYAG 'TSAL BA YOD DE, YAN LAG GI DAM PA MGO BOS PHYAG 'TSAL BA STE 'DUD PAR BYED PA' I PHYIR RO,

The good quality of *His exalted speech* could be explained with regards to its nature, but let us here consider it from the point of view of its result. The good quality or function of the speech of the One Thus Gone is acting to *fulfill* both the temporal and ultimate *hopes of living beings* who are *infinite* in number. By what means does it fulfill their hopes? It benefits them by teaching them those teachings which resolve the doubts at every juncture in their life, and by leading them toward the higher realms and definite good.

As for the nature of the particular good qualities of *His exalted mind*, it sees directly *each and every knowable thing just as it is*—all of them, the way they are, as many as they may be.

There is a way in which we may bow down to *the Prince of the Shakya* clan, to Shakyamuni, who possesses these exalted qualities of body, speech, and mind. To Him, the able one of the Shakyas, we may bow down with the very highest of our limbs, making prostrations with our head.

Prostration to Loving One and Gentle Voice

The second point is contained within these lines of the root text:

,ZLA MED STON PA DE YI SRAS KYI MCHOGRGYAL BA'IMDZAD PA KUN
GYI KHUR BSNAMS NAS, ,GRANGS MED ZHING DU SPRUL PAS RNAM
ROL BA, ,MI PHAM 'JAM PA'IDBYANGS LA PHYAG 'TSAL LO,

(2)

**I bow down
to the Undefeatable,
and to Gentle Voice,**

**Those supreme sons
of our Teacher,
who is without rival.**

**Having taken on
the load of all the
Victorious One's activity,**

**They act by
emanating themselves
In countless paradises.**

,GNYIS PA NI, ZLA MED STON PA DE YI, ZHES SOGS BZHI STE, PHYAG
'TSAL LO, , GANG LA NA, 'GRAN ZLA MED PA'ISTON PA DE YI CHOS KYI
SRAS BYANG SEMS RNAMS KYI NANG NAS MCHOGRGYAL TU GYUR CING

RGYAL BA DE'I SKU GSUNG THUGS KYI MDZAD PA KUN GYI KHUR
BSNAMS PA STE BZHES NAS 'JIG RTEN GYI KHAMS 'DIR MA ZAD GRANGS
MED PA'I SANGS RGYAS KYI ZHING DU BYANG SEMS SOGS SPRUL PA DU
MA'I GAR GYIS RNAM PAR ROL BA CAN MI PHAM BYAMS PA DANG 'JAM
PA'I DBYANGS GNYIS LA'O, , MDZAD PA'I KHUR BZHES TSUL NI, BYAMS
'JAM DBYANGS GNYIS KYIS THUB PA'I DAM PA'I CHOS SPYI DANG ,
KHYAD PAR RGYA CHEN SPYOD PA DANG ZAB MO'I LTA BA'I BRGYUD
RIM BZUNG STE SPEL BAR MDZAD PA 'DI'O,

Having taken on—that is, accepted—the load of all the activity of the Victorious One's exalted body, speech and mind, the Undefeatable Loving One and Gentle Voice are putting on a show. Not only on this planet but in countless Buddha paradises they are acting out their parts by emanating themselves as bodhisattvas and other types of beings. Je Tsongkapa bows down to those two dharma sons of our unrivaled Teacher, the two who are supreme among all bodhisattvas.

The way in which they take on the load of His activity is as follows. Both Loving One and Gentle Voice cause the holy teachings of the Able One in general, and more specifically, the lineage of widespread activities and the lineage of profound view to remain and flourish in the world.

Prostration to Nagarjuna and Asanga

The third point of the offering of praise is expressed in the following verse:

,SHIN TU DPAG PAR DKA' BA RGYAL BA'I YUM, ,JI BZHIN DGONGS PA
'GREL MDZAD 'DZAM GLING RGYAN, ,KLU SGRUB THOGS MED CES NI
SA GSUM NA, ,YONGS SU GRAGS PA'I ZHABS LA BDAG PHYAG 'TSAL,

(3)

**To those jewels
of our Southern Continent
who commented just as was meant**

**Upon the *Mother of the Victors*
which is so very
difficult to fathom.**

**To those who are
known throughout
all of the three realms**

**To Nagarjuna and Asanga
at their feet
I bow down.**

,G SUM PA NI, SHIN TU DPAG PAR DKA' BA SOGS BZHI STE, PHYAG 'TSAL
LO, , GANG LA NA, RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB SPYI DANG KHYAD PAR,
SHIN TU DPAG PAR TE RTOGS PAR DKA' BA RGYAL BA'I YUM RGYAS
'BRING BSDUS PA GSUM GYI DON JI LTA BA BZHIN DU DGONGS PA
'GREL PAR MDZAD PA'I SGO NAS 'DZAM GLING GI RGYAN DU GYUR PA
MTSON LA MGON PO KLU SGRUB DANG 'PHAGS PA THOGS MED CES NI
SA 'OG SA STENG SA BLA STE SA GSUM NA YONGS SU GRAGS PA'I ZHABS
LA'O, , GANG GIS NA, BDAG BLO BZANG GRAGS PA'I DPAL GYIS SO,

Here the prostration is made in general to the highest form of speech—that of the Victorious Buddhas—and more particularly to the savior *Nagarjuna* and the realized being *Asanga*. These two are here named to represent all of those *who commented just as it was meant to be upon* the true intent of those sutras which are *so very difficult to fathom; that is, to grasp*. Here we are referring to the *Mother of the Victors* in all its three forms—extensive, middle length, and brief. *These two masters, who are known throughout all the three realms—below the earth, upon the earth, and above the earth—have become like the jewels of our Southern Continent*. The “I” referred to here in the text, the one who is *bowing down at their feet*, is the glorious Lobsang Drakpa.

Prostration to Atisha

These lines contain the fourth point of the offering of praise:

,SHING RTA CHEN PO GNYIS LAS LEGS BRGYUD PA'I, ,ZAB MO'I LTA BA
RGYA CHEN SPYOD PA'I LAM, ,MA NOR YONGS SU RDZOGS PA'I GNAD
BSDUS PA'I, ,GDAMS PA'I MDZOD 'DZIN MAR ME MDZAD LA 'DUD,

(4)

**I bow down to the Maker of Light,
the one who holds**

the treasury of instructions

**Which contain without mistake,
the totality of
all the important points—**

**Those of the path
of profound view,
and those of widespread activity—**

**Which came down to him
so perfectly through the lineage
of the two great innovators.**

,BZHI PA NI, SHING RTA CHEN PO GNYIS LAS SOGS BZHI STE, 'DUD DO, ,
GANG LA NA, SHING RTA CHEN PO KLU SGRUB DANG THOGS MED
RNAM PA GNYIS LAS LEGS PAR BRGYUD PA'I ZAB MO LTA BA DANG ,
RGYA CHEN SPYOD PA'I LAM GYI RIM PA TSANG LA MA NOR BAR
YONGS SU RDZOGS PA'I GNAD BSDUS PA'I GDAMS PA'I MDZOD 'DZIN PA
DPAL MAR ME MDZAD LA'O, , DE YANG JO BO CHEN POS BLA MA GSER
GLING PA BSTEN NAS BYAMS PA DANG THOGS MED NAS BRGYUD PA'I
GDAMS PA GSAN LA, RIGS PA'I KHU BYUG BSTEN NAS 'JAM DBYANGS
DANG KLU SGRUB NAS BRGYUD PA'I GDAMS NGAG [?] MA LUS PA GSAN
NAS GDAMS PA'I CHU BO GNYIS ZUNG DU 'BREL BAR MDZAD DO,

Here Je Tsongkapa *bows down* to Atisha, the glorious *Maker of Light*. He is *the one who holds the treasury of instructions which contain in their entirety without mistake the totality of all the important points of the steps of the path of the teachings on profound view and widespread activity*. These instructions *came down to him perfectly through the lineage* which began with *the two great innovators*, Nagarjuna and Asanga.

By relying on the Lama Serlingpa, the Great Lord Atisha heard those teachings which came down through the lineage of Loving One and Asanga, and by relying on Vidyakokila he heard in their entirety the teachings from the lineage of Gentle Voice and Nagarjuna. He then composed commentaries combining together these two great currents of teachings.

Prostration to all Spiritual Guides

The last point of the offering of praise is contained within this verse of the root text:

, RAB 'BYAMS GSUNG RAB KUN LA LTA BA'I MIG,SKAL BZANG THAR
PAR BGROD PA'I 'JUG NGOGS MCHOG,BRTZE BAS BSKYOD PA'I THABS
MKHAS MDZAD PA YIS, ,GSAL MDZAD BSHES GNYEN RNAMS LA GUS
PHYAG 'TSAL,

(5)

**I bow down
with deep respect
to all Spiritual Guides.**

**Inspired by their love
they act with skillful means
in order to make clear**

**The supreme entry point
for those fortunate ones
who are travelling to freedom—**

**That eye which can see
all the myriad forms
of the Buddha's supreme speech.**

,LNGA PA NI, RAB 'BYAMS GSUNG RAB KUN LA SOGS BZHI STE, PHYAG
'TSAL LO, , GANG LA NA, PHYOGS RE TZAM MA YIN PAR RAB 'BYAMS
GSUNG RAB KUN LA LTA BA'I MIG TU GYUR CING , SKAL BA BZANG POR
GYUR PA'I GDUL BYA THAR PAR BGROD PA'I 'JUG NGOGS TE LAM
MCHOG TU GYUR PA'I SKYES BU GSUM GYI LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI NYID,
BRTZE BA'I THUGS KYIS BSKYOD PA STE DRANGS PA'I THABS MKHAS KYI
MDZAD PA YIS GDUL BYA LA GSAL BAR MDZAD PA'I BSHES GNYEN
RNAMS LA'O, , TSUL JI LTAR NA, TSIG TZAM MA YIN PAR YID GUS PA'I
SGO NAS SO, 'DIR LTA BA'I MIG CES PA NI, KHA CIG BSHES GNYEN LA
SBYOR BAR SNANG YANG , LAM RIM NYID LA BYED PAR RJE'I DGONGS
PA YIN PAR LAM RIM CHEN MO'I MJUG TU GSAL LO,

This very teaching on the steps of the path for people of the three capacities is like an *eye* with *which you can see all the myriad forms of the Buddha's supreme*

speech, and not only certain parts of it. It is also the supreme entry point and path which allows fortunate disciples to travel to freedom. Here our Lord bows down to all the Spiritual Guides who inspired and driven by their exalted thoughts of love are acting with skillful means in order to make this teaching clear to their disciples. He bows down not only in his words, but with deep thoughts of respect.

Some people explain that the words "that eye which can see" refer to the Spiritual Guide, but Je Tsongkapa's true intention was that the "eye" refer to the teaching on the steps itself. This fact is made clear towards the ends of his *Great Book on the Steps of the Path*.

IDENTIFICATION OF WHAT IS GOING TO BE EXPLAINED

Now I shall identify that which is actually going to be explained in three sections: details of the lineage of the teaching, its special features, and its necessity.

Details of the Lineage

The details of the lineage are explained in this verse:

, 'DZAM GLING MKHAS PA YONGS KYI GTZUG GI RGYAN, ,SNYAN PA'I
BA DAN 'GRO NA LHAND NGE BA, ,KLU SGRUB THOGS MED GNYIS LAS
RIM BZHIN DU, ,LEGS BRGYUD BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA NI,

(6)

**These steps of the path
to enlightenment
progressively came down**

**Through an excellent lineage
from both Nagarjuna,
and Asanga—**

**Those jewels on the crowns
of all the great masters
of our world—**

**Whose brilliance shines
like a victory banner**

among living beings.

,GNYIS PA BSHAD BYA NGOS BZUNG BA LA GSUM, BRGYUD PA'I KHYAD
PAR, KHYAD CHOS, DGOS PA'O, , DANG PO NI, 'DZAM GLING MKHAS PA
YONGS KYI SOGS BZHI STE, 'DZAM GLING 'DIR BYON PA'I MKHAS PA
YONGS KYI GTZUG GI RGYAN DU GYUR CING , MKHAS PA'I SNYAN PA
PHYOGS KUN TU GRAGS PA'I BA DAN 'GRO BA'I GNAS 'DI NA NYI MA
LTAR LHANG NGER GSAL BA KLU SGRUB DANG THOGS MED GNYIS LAS
RIM PA BZHIN DU LEGS PAR BRGYUD PA'I BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM
PA'I GZHUNG NYID 'CHAD PAR BYA'O, , ZHES RTZOM PA DAM BCA' DON
GYIS MDZAD DO,

That which I shall explain is precisely those great books on the *steps of the path to enlightenment* which came down to us progressively thorough an excellent lineage beginning with both *Nagarjuna and Asanga*. Of all the great masters who ever came to our world, they were like the *jewels on the tips of their crowns*. In this land, among living beings, the fame of their knowledge was as brilliant and clear as the sun, shining in all directions like a banner of victory.

Implicitly in these lines Je Tsongkapa pledges to compose his treatise.

Special Features of the Teaching

,GNYIS PA LA GNYIS, DPE DON GYI KHYAD PAR DANG , KHYAD CHOS
DNGOS SO, , DANG PO NI,

There are two points to the special features of this teachings: certain special metaphors and their meanings, and its actual special features.

The special metaphors and their meanings are set forth in this verse of the root text:

, SKYE DGU'I 'DOD DON MA LUS SKONG BAS NA, ,GDAMS PA RIN CHEN
DBANG GI RGYAL PO STE, ,GZHUNG BZANG STONG GI CHU BO 'DU BA'I
PHYIR, ,DPAL LDAN LEGS PAR BSHAD PA'I RGYA MTSO'ANG YIN,

(7)

**Because it fulfills every
desire of the many
kinds of people,**

**It's like a king among lords
of the precious gems
of instruction.**

**Because it combines all together
the river currents
of thousands of fine scriptures,**

**It's like a great ocean
of glorious and
excellent explanation.**

SKYE RGU'I 'DOD DON MA LUS SKONG BAS NA, , SOGS BZHI STE, DE
LTAR BRGYUD PA'I BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI NI, DPE DON GYI
KHYAD PAR JI LTA BU DANG LDAN ZHE NA, YOD DE, THAR 'DOD KYI
SKYE RGU'I 'DOD DON MA LUS PA SKONG BAS NA, GDAMS PA RIN CHEN
DBANG GI RGYAL PO LTA BU STE, YID BZHIN GYI NOR BU RIN PO CHE
DANG CHOS MTSUNGS SHING , THEG PA CHE CHUNG GI GZHUNG LUGS
BZANG PO STONG GI LEGS BSHAD KYI CHU BO MA LUS PA 'DU BA'I
PHYIR NA, DPAL LDAN TE PHUN SUM TSOGS PA LEGS PAR BSHAD PA'I
RGYA MTSO LTA BU'ANG YIN NO, , 'DOD PA'I DON SKANG TSUL NI, 'DI'I
DON NYAMS SU BLANGS PA LAS MNGON MTHO DANG NGES LEGS
'GRUB PA DANG , GZHUNG LUGS STONG STE MANG TSIG SMOS PA YIN
PAS GRANGS STONG KHO NAR MI BZUNG ZHING , DE RNAMS 'DU TSUL
YANG RJOD BYED KYI TSIG THAMS CAD 'DU BA'I DON MIN GYI BRJOD
BYA'I DON MTHA' DAG 'DU BA'O,

There are special metaphors used to describe this teaching on the steps of the path to enlightenment, which was passed down to us in the lineage just described. *Because it fulfills every desire of the many kinds of people who seek freedom, it is like a king among the lords of all the precious gems of instruction*—just like that special jewel which grants your every wish. It can fulfill your wishes because if you practice its true meaning, you will achieve higher births and definite good.

Because this teaching combines all together the river currents of the fine explanations found in the thousands of fine scriptures of the greater and lesser ways, it is like a great ocean of glorious—that is, perfect—and excellent explanation. It brings them all together not by including each and every word of the scriptures, but rather by incorporating the meanings of all their subject matter. The expression "thousands of scriptures" is used here to indicate a great number of scriptures, and does not necessarily refer to exactly one thousand scriptures.

The actual special features of the teachings are indicated here in the root text:

,BSTAN PA THAMS CAD 'GAL MED RTOGS PA DANG , ,GSUNG RAB MA
LUS GDAMS PAR 'CHAR BA DANG , ,RGYAL BA'I DGONGS PA BDE BLAG
RNYED PA DANG , ,NYES SPYOD CHEN PO'I G-YANG SA LAS KYANG
BSRUNG ,

(8)

**You'll realize that
all the Buddha's teachings
totally lack inconsistency,**

**And His highest of speech
will strike you as
personal advice.
You will easily
find the true intent
of the Victorious Buddhas,**

**And be protected from
falling into the chasm
of the great mistake.**

,GNYIS PA NI, BSTAN PA THAMS CAD 'GAL MED SOGS BZHI STE, DE LTA
BU'I GZHUNG 'DI NI, KHYAD CHOS SAM CHE BA BZHI DANG LDAN TE,
GDAMS PA 'DI LA BR TEN NAS RGYAL BAS CHOS TSUL JI SNYED CIG
GSUNGS PA THAMS CAD LAS, KHA CIG NI LAM GYI GTZO BO, KHA CIG
NI DE'I YAN LAG STON BYED DU SHES NAS DNGOS DANG BRGYUD PA CI
RIGS KYI SGO NAS 'TSANG RGYA BA'I CHA RKYEN DU GO BAR 'GYUR BAS
NA, BSTAN PA THAMS CAD 'GAL MED DU RTOGS PA'I CHE BA DANG ,

MDO SNGAGS KYI GSUNG RAB RNAMS DANG DE'I DGONGS 'GREL GYI BSTAN BCOS RNAMS BSHAD CHOS TZAM DU BZUNG NAS NYAMS SU LEN RGYU DE DAG GI DON LAS GZHAN ZHIG NA YOD PAR 'DZIN PA'I LOG RTOG RNAMS LDOG STE, GSUNG RAB DGONGS 'GREL DANG BCAS PA'I BRJOD BYA MTHA' DAG NYAMS SU LEN GYI GO RIM DANG MTHUN PAR BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL NAS ZHI LHAG GI BAR BSDUS NAS DPYAD SGOM DANG 'JOG SGOM CI RIGS KYI SGO NAS NYAMS SU LEN TSUL SHES PAR 'GYUR BAS NA, GSUNG RAB THAMS CAD GDAMS PAR 'CHAR BA'I CHE BA DANG , DE LTAR GSUNG RAB THAMS CAD GDAMS NGAG GI MCHOG YIN KYANG BLO MA SBYANGS PA'I LAS DANG PO BAS GZHUNG CHE BA DE DAG GI DGONGS DON RANG STOBS KYIS RTOGS NAS NYAMS SU LEN MI SHES PAS, DE DAG GI DGONGS DON RNAMS 'DUS PA'I BLA MA'I MAN NGAG BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI LTA BU LA BR TEN NAS GZHUNG CHE BA DE RNAMS KYI DGONGS DON LEGS PAR RTOGS PAR 'GYUR BAS NA, RGYAL BA'I DGONGS PA BDE BLAG TU RTOGS PA'I CHE BA DANG , DE LTAR RNYED PA'I TSE SANGS RGYAS KYI BKA' THAMS CAD DNGOS DANG BRGYUD PA CI RIGS KYI SGO NAS 'TSANG RGYA BA'I THABS SU GO NAS 'TSANG RGYA BA'I THABS MI STON PA'I SANGS RGYAS KYI BKA' MED PAR SHES TE, GSUNG RAB DE DAG LA GDUL BYA'I DBANG GIS BRJOD BYA CUNG ZAD RE MI MTHUN PA DANG MCHOG DMAN YOD KYANG , THAMS CAD 'TSANG RGYA BA'I THABS STON PA TZAM LA KHYAD PAR MED PAR NGES NAS CHOS SPONG BA'I LAS MI 'BYUNG BA STE, NYES SPYOD CHEN PO'I G-YANG SA LAS KYANG SRUNG BA'I CHE BA BZHI DANG LDAN PA'I PHYIR RO,

This teachings possesses four special features, or you could say four great qualities. The first is that if you rely on this teaching *you will* come to *realize that all of the Buddha's teachings are totally lacking any inconsistency.* Of all the teachings spoken by the Victorious Buddhas, however many there may be, some of them teach the principal paths and others teach that which branches off from them. Once you know this, you will come to understand that they are all either direct or indirect factors in reaching enlightenment.

You will not have the wrong view which considers the open and secret teachings of the Buddha—those highest of all words—and the classical commentaries which comment upon their true intent to be mere explanations. You will not think that you have to look somewhere other than in the content of these books for something to use for your personal practice. Rather you will come to see that the entire subject matter of the Buddha's supreme speech along with its classical commentaries is perfectly in keeping with the progressive structure through

which you do your actual practice. You will come to understand how it is that every step from taking yourself to a Spiritual Guide all the way up to the practices of developing quietude and special vision can be put into your personal practice, either through analytical meditation or through fixation meditation.

If you understand these points, then all of the *high speech* of the Buddha *will strike you as personal advice*. This is the second of the great qualities. Even though all of the teachings of the Buddha are the ultimate form of personal instruction, us spiritual beginners who haven't studied enough are unable to understand the true intent of the great scriptures on our own, nor are we able to bring them into our personal practice. Therefore we need to rely on something like this teaching on the steps of the path to enlightenment, through which our Lamas give us their personal advice on the true meaning of these original works.

This makes it *easy* for us to grasp *the true intent of the Victorious Buddhas*, and that is another great quality of the teaching on the steps. Once you *find* this true intent, you will understand that every word the Buddha ever said contributes either directly or indirectly to our reaching enlightenment, and that there is not a single word He spoke which does not teach a method of achieving enlightenment.

In the Buddha's teachings there can appear to be some slight inconsistencies, which are required due to the needs of particular disciples, and there are also distinctions between the higher and lower teachings. But there is no difference between any of them from the point of view that they were all taught solely as methods for reaching enlightenment. If you become certain of this, you will never commit the bad deed of rejecting Buddhist teachings, and will thus *be protected from falling into the chasm of that great mistake*. This is the last of the four great qualities.

Necessity of the Teaching

,GSUM PA LA GNYIS, CHE BA DE LDAN GYI CHOS 'DI NYAMS SU LEN
RIGS PA DANG , NYAMS SU BLANGS PA'I PHAN YON NO, , DANG PO NI,

The necessity of the teaching has two points: first why it is proper to practice this teaching which has these great qualities, and then the benefits of having put it into practice. These lines explain why it is proper to practice this teachings:

,DE PHYIR RGYA BOD MKHAS PA'I SKYE BO NI, ,SKAL LDAN DU MAS
BSTEN PA'I GDAMS PA MCHOG,SKYES BU GSUM GYI LAM GYI RIM PA
YIS, ,YID RAB MI 'PHROG DPYOD LDAN SU ZHIG YOD,

(9)

**Therefore,
many learned masters,
both Indian and Tibetan,**

**Those ones with virtue's seed,
took as the very basis
of their personal practice**

**The supreme instructions
on the steps of the path
for people of three capacities.**

**Would they not then
steal away the heart
of any discerning person?**

DE PHYIR RGYA BOD MKHAS PA'I SOGS BZHI STE, SNGAR BSHAD PA'I
CHE BA DE LTAR YOD PA'I RGYU MTSAN DE'I PHYIR NA, RGYA GAR
DANG BOD KYI MKHAS PA'I SKYE BO NI SKAL BA DANG LDAN PA DU
MAS NYAMS LEN DU BSTEN PA'I GDAMS PA MCHOG TU GYUR PA SKYES
BU CHUNG 'BRING CHE GSUM GYI LAM GYI RIM PA YIS NI YID RAB TU
MI 'PHROG PA'I RNAM DPYOD DANG LDAN PA SU ZHIG YOD DE MED
DO,

This tradition possesses the great qualities I explained above; for this reason, *therefore, many learned Indian and Tibetan masters who had the necessary seeds of virtue took as the very basis of their personal practice the supreme instructions on the steps of the path for people of three capacities*—those of lesser, medium and the greater capacities. *Would these instructions not then steal away the heart of any discerning person?* Of course they would.

The benefits of having put the teachings of the path to enlightenment into practice are explained here:

,GSUNG RAB KUN GYI SNYING PO BSDU BSDU BA, ,TSUL 'DI THUN RE
STON DANG NYAN PAS KYANG , ,DAM CHOS 'CHAD DANG THOS PA'I
PHAN YON TSOGS, ,RLABS CHEN SDUD PAR NGES PAS DE DON BSAM,

(10)

**In but a single session
of imparting and learning
this system of teaching,**

**Which incorporates in brief
the very essence
of all the supreme speech,**

**You are certain to obtain
in one fell swoop
all the benefits**

**Of explaining and listening to
the entire teachings;
contemplate this fact.**

,GNYIS PA NI, GSUNG RAB KUN GYI SNYING PO SOGS BZHI STE, THEG PA
CHE CHUNG GI GSUNG RAB KUN GYI SNYING PO BSDU BSDU BA'I
GZHUNG GI TSUL 'DI NI, LAN MANG DU LTA CI THUN RE STON PA
DANG LAN RE NYAN PAS KYANG GZHUNG CHE BA NAS DAM CHOS
'CHAD PA DANG THOS PA'I PHAN YON GYI TSOGS RLABS CHEN 'BYUNG
BAR GSUNGS PA DE RNAMS SDUD PAR NGES PAS SO, , RGYU MTSAN DES
NA, DE'I DON YID LA BSAM PAR BYA'O, , ZHES PA NI DON BSDU BA'I SGO
NAS GDAMS PA'O, , BSDU BSDU BA NI GSUNG RAB THAMS CAD KYI
GNAD BSDUS PA DANG DE YANG MDOR BSDUS TE BSTAN PA'I DON NO,

The major scriptures describe a great number of benefits that occur when you explain or listen to any one teaching of the Buddha. Suppose you were to devote but *a single session*, much less a number of sessions, to *imparting and learning this system of teaching*: the steps of the path. Because it *incorporates in brief the very essence of all the supreme speech* belonging to both the greater and lesser ways, it is *certain that you would then in one fell swoop obtain all the benefits of explaining and listening to all the Buddha's teachings in their entirety*. You should therefore

contemplate this fact. In a brief way then Je Tsongkapa is giving us personal advice about our practice.

The phrase "incorporates in brief" [*du du* in the Tibetan] refers to the fact that the teachings on the steps of the path incorporate [*du*] the vital points of the entire supreme speech of the Buddha, and do so in an abbreviated [*du*] way.

,GNYSIS PA GZHUNG GI DON BSHAD PA LA, MCHOD BRJOD SOGS NI,
GZHUNG GI YAN LAG YIN LA, 'DIR GZHUNG DON DNGOS KYI DBANG
DU BYAS TE 'CHAD PA LA GNYIS, THUN MONG BA DANG , THUN MONG
MA YIN PA'I LAM LA BSLAB TSUL LO, , DANG PO LA GNYIS, SNGON 'GRO
DANG , DNGOS GZHI'O, , DANG PO NI,

THE ACTUAL BODY OF THE TEXT

Those points concerning the offering of praise and so on are secondary parts of the text. Here I am going to make my explanation with reference to the actual meaning of the text. I shall do so in two parts: the way to practice the shared paths, and the way to practice the path which is not shared.

THE WAY TO PRACTICE THE SHARED PATHS

The discussion of the way to practice the shared paths is divided into two: the preliminary step followed by the main steps.

THE PRELIMINARY STEP

The preliminary step is covered in these lines of the root text:

,DE NAS 'DI PHYI' I LEGS TSOGS JI SNYED PA'I, ,RTEN 'BREL LEGS PAR
'GRIG PA'I RTZA BA NI, ,LAM STON BSHES GNYEN DAM PA 'BAD PA YIS,
,BSAM DANG SBYOR BAS TSUL BZHIN BSTEN PA RU, ,MTHONG NAS
SROG GI PHYIR YANG MI GTONG BAR, ,BKA' BZHIN SGRUB PA'I MCHOD
PAS MNYES PAR BYED, ,RNAL 'BYOR NGAS KYANG NYAMS LEN DE LTAR
BGYIS, ,THAR 'DOD KHYED KYANG DE BZHIN BSKYANG 'TSAL LO,

(11)

After having done this, see that

**the very foundation
Of an excellent start for all the good
in this and your future lives
Is the holy Spiritual Guide
who teaches you the path.**

**Make efforts to rely on Him properly
in your thoughts and in your actions;
Please Him with the offering of
carrying out His every instruction.
And never give it up, not even
at the cost of your life.**

**I, the master meditator,
lived my life this way;**

**You, who seek for freedom,
must try to do the same.**

DE NAS 'DI PHYI' LEGS TSOGS SOGS BRGYAD DE, LAM RIM YONGS
RDZOGS DANG DE'I CHA SHAS TZAM LAS SU BLANGS PA LAS KYANG
PHAN YON CHEN PO YOD TSUL BSAM PA SOGS SNGON DU BTANG STE
DE NAS 'DI LTAR NYAMS SU BLANG BAR BYA'O, , ZHES MTSAMS SBYAR
RO,

First you must contemplate the points above, such as the great benefits that come from putting into practice all, or even just a part of, the steps of the path. *After having done this*, says Je Tsongkapa, you should begin the actual practices which are to follow. He uses these words to lead the reader into the actual steps of the path.

,PHAN YON DE LTAR MTHONG BA DES, 'DI DANG PHYI MA'I LEGS TSOGS
JI SNYED MCHIS PA'I RTEN 'BREL LEGS PAR 'GRIG PAR 'GYUR BA'I RTZA
BA NI, RANG LA LAM STON PA'I DGE BA'I BSHES GNYEN DAM PAR SHES
PAR BYAS TE, 'BAD PA DRAG PO YIS, BLA MA LA SKYON RTOG GI BLO
BKAG NAS DAD PA SKYE CI THUB BYED PA'I SGO NAS BSAM PAS BSTEN
PA DANG , BLA MA MNYES PA SGO MTHA' DAG NAS BSGRUB CING MA
MNYES PA NAM YANG MI BSGRUB PA DANG , LUS KYIS BKUR ZHING
NGAG GIS BSTOD PA SOGS DANG , CI GSUNG BKA' BZHIN DU SGRUB PA'I
SGO NAS SBYOR BAS TSUL BZHIN DU BSTEN PA RU STE BSTEN PA LA

RAG LAS PAR MTHONG NAS RKYEN CUNG ZAD TZAM DU MA ZAD,
SROG GI PHYIR YANG MI GTONG BAR BKA' BZHIN DU SGRUB PA'I
MCHOD PAS MNYES PAR BYED DGOS SO,

Having understood these benefits, you must then *see that the holy Spiritual Guide who teaches you the path is the very foundation* for getting you off to an excellent start for all the good in this and your future lives. Realize that all this depends on how you serve your Lama, and then with fierce *efforts rely* on Him *in your thoughts* by stopping that state of mind which thinks it sees faults in Him, and by developing feelings of faith towards Him as much as you can.

Rely *properly* on your Lama *in your actions* by paying Him respect with your body, praising Him with your words, and so forth. Undertake whatever you can to please your Lama in every possible way, and never undertake anything which would displease Him. Accomplish whatever He or She tells you to do.

Understanding this, you must *please* your Lama *with the offering of carrying out His every instruction*. You can *never give this up even at the cost of you life*, so what need is there to say anything about mere small incidents?

,DE'I MJUG TU, RJE'I GSUNG 'BUM THOR BU LAS, RNAL 'BYOR NGAS
KYANG NYAMS LEN DE LTAR BYAS, , THAR 'DOD KHYED KYANG DE
BZHIN BSKYANG 'TSAL LO, , ZHES 'BYUNG BA NI, RJE'I GSUNG DNGOS
YIN LA, CHOS SPYOD LAS, RJE BTZUN BLA MAS NYAMS LEN DE LTAR
MDZAD, , THAR 'DOD BDAG KYANG DE BZHIN BSKYANG 'TSAL LO, ,
ZHES 'BYUNG BA NI, PHYIS GZHAN GYIS BSGYUR BA STE, DON GO SLA
ZHING PHYI MA GZHAN LA'ANG SBYOR, BLA MA'I MTSAN NYID, BSTEN
TSUL SOGS LAM RIM SOGS NAS SHES PAR BYA'O,

After these instructions come a special refrain, beginning with the words "I, the master meditator..." These are the actual lines as Je Tsongkapa first wrote them. Later on they were changed by someone else, and in modern prayer books we see the following:

The venerable Lamas of the past
lived their lives this way;
I, too, seeking freedom
will try to do the same.

The meaning of the refrain is easy to understand. When it appears later on in the text, refer back to what I have said here.

If you want to know the defining qualities of a Lama, the way in which you should rely on Him or Her, and other such details, you can learn them in the books on the steps of the path, and other such works.

THE MAIN STEPS

The section on the main steps has two points: an urging to take the essence of your leisure and fortune, and the way to take that essence.

An Urging to Take the Essence of This Life

The urging is expressed in these lines of the root text:

,DAL BA'I RTEN 'DI YID BZHIN NOR LAS LHAG,'DI 'DRA RNYED PA DA
RES TZAM ZHIG YIN,

(12a)

**This body of leisure is more valuable than
a jewel which grants every wish;
And now is the only time that you
have found such a life as this.**

,GNYIS PA LA GNYIS, DAL 'BYOR LA SNYING PO LEN PAR BSKUL BA
DANG , SNYING PO JI LTAR LEN TSUL LO, , DANG PO NI, DAL BA'I RTEN
'DI YID BZHIN NOR SOGS TE, DAL BRGYAD 'BYOR BCU LDAN PA'I SGO
NAS CHOS SGRUB PA LA KHOS PAS NA DAL BA'I RTEN KHYAD PAR CAN
'DI NI, YID BZHIN GYI NOR BU RIN PO CHE LAS KYANG LHAG PA 'DI
'DRA BA NI SNGAR YANG YANG RNYED PA MA YIN GYI RNYED PA DUS
DA RES TZAM ZHIG YIN NO, , DES RNYED NA DON CHE BAR MA ZAD,
RNYED PAR DKA' BAR BSTAN TO,

Having the eight leisures and the ten fortunes is essential to practicing the Buddhist teachings. Therefore, this very special body and life of leisure which you now have is even more valuable than a precious jewel which grants every wish. It is not something which you were able to find over and over again in the

Having the eight leisures and the ten fortunes is essential to practicing the Buddhist teachings. Therefore, *this very special body and life of leisure which you now have is even more valuable than a precious jewel which grants every wish.* It is not something which you were able to find over and over again in the past. *Now is the only time* you have been able to *find a life such as this one.* These lines do not only indicate how meaningful it is to have found such a life, but also how difficult it is to find.

,YID BZHIN GYI NOR BU LAS LHAG TSUL NI NOR BU LAS DGOS 'DOD
'BYUNG YANG TSE 'DI'I GNAS SKABS KYI 'DOD DON YIN LA, RTEN 'DI LA
BR TEN NAS MNGON MTHO TZAM DU MA ZAD, NGES LEGS THAR PA
DANG THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA BSGRUBS NA'ANG THOB NUS PAR
GSUNGS PA'I PHYIR NA LHAG GO, DE LTAR RNYED DKA' ZHING RNYED
NA DON CHE BA'I DAL 'BYOR GYI RTEN 'DI DON MED DU MI BTANG BAR
'DI LA RANG GIS CI NUS KYI SGO NAS CHOS BYA BA'I DAM BCA' BRTAN
PO BYA'O,

How is this life more valuable than a wish-fulfilling jewel? From such a jewel you can get the things you need and the things you want, but these benefits are only the temporal objects you may wish for in this life. It has been stated by the Buddha that if you use your body and mind properly, not only can you reach the higher births, you can also achieve definite good—freedom and the state of all-knowing. Therefore, this life is more valuable.

Suppose you do happen to find a body and mind with these leisures and fortunes, so difficult to attain and, once attained, so meaningful. You should not spend them meaninglessly. Make a firm pledge to yourself that you will practice the Buddhist teachings to the very best of your ability.

The Way to Take the Essence of This Life

The way to take the essence of this life has two sub-sections: how the teachings are organized into sections of the path, and the way of actually practicing them.

,GNYIS PA SNYING PO JI LTAR LEN TSUL LA GNYIS, LAM GYI DBANG DU
BYAS PA'I GSUNG RAB RNAMS 'DU TSUL DANG , NYAMS SU LEN TSUL
DNGOS SO, , DANG PO NI, SANGS RGYAS BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS CHOS
KYI PHUNG PO JI SNYED CIG GSUNGS PA NI SEMS CAN GYI DON DU YIN
LA, DE YANG MNGON MTHO NGES LEGS GNYIS LAS, MNGON MTHO LAS

BRTZAMS TE GTZO BOR GSUNGS PA RNAMS SKYES BU CHUNG NGU DNGOS SAM DE DANG THUN MONG BA'I CHOS SKOR DU 'DU ZHING , NGES LEGS LA GNYIS LAS THAR PA LAS BRTZAMS TE GTZO BOR GSUNGS PA RNAMS SKYES BU 'BRING DNGOS SAM DE DANG THUN MONG BA'I CHOS SKOR DU 'DU LA, THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA SGRUB PA LAS BRTZAMS TE GSUNGS PA THAMS CAD SKYES BU CHEN PO'I CHOS SKOR DU 'DU BA YIN NO,

However many mountains of teachings were spoken by the Conquering Buddhas, all of them were meant to benefit living beings. If we look at them from the point of view of higher births and definite good, those teachings spoken by the Buddha which mainly address higher births belong to that group of teachings called either the actual path for people of lesser capacity, or the path shared with them. Those teachings which deal principally with freedom, one of the two parts of definite good, belong to the group of the teachings called either the actual path for people of medium capacity, or those sections of the path which are shared with them. Everything ever spoken by the Buddha which addresses how to achieve the state of all-knowing is included in the group of teachings for people of greater capacity.

, 'DIR SKYES BU CHUNG 'BRING DANG THUN MONG BA'I LAM 'GA' ZHIG SKYES BU CHEN PO'I LAM GYI YAN LAG TU DGOS PA DER 'KHRID PA YIN GYI, SKYES BU CHUNG 'BRING DNGOS KYI LAM LA 'KHRID PA NI MA YIN TE, MNGON MTHO TZAM ZHIG DON GNYER GYI BLO DE SKYES BU CHUNG NGU'I LAM DNGOS DANG , RANG DON DU THAR PA TZAM ZHIG DON GNYER GYI BLO DE SKYES BU 'BRING GI LAM DNGOS YIN PAS, DER 'KHRID NA NI SKYES BU CHEN PO'I LAM GYI GOL SAR 'KHRID PA'I SKYON DU 'GYUR BA'I PHYIR RO,

In this tradition we lead students along those parts of the path shared with people of lesser and medium capacity which are necessary accessories to the path of those of greater capacity. We do not however lead them along the actual paths of people of lesser and medium capacity. This is because what we call the actual path for people of lesser capacity consists of the state of mind where one aspires only for the higher births, and what we call the actual path for people of medium capacity consists of the state of mind where one aspires for freedom solely for one's own benefit. And so if we were to lead our students along these paths, there would come the problem that we would be leading them into a grave point of error in the path for people of greater capacity.

, 'O NA, DE GNYIS DANG THUN MONG BA'I LAM JI LTA BU ZHE NA, SDIG SPONG DGE BA SGRUB PA'I SGO NAS MNGON MTHO DON GNYER GYI BLO DE, SKYES BU CHUNG NGU DANG THUN MONG BA'I LAM DANG , 'KHOR BA LAS GROL 'DOD KYI SGO NAS THAR PA DON GNYER GYI BLO DE SKYES BU 'BRING DANG

THUN MONG BA'I LAM YIN TE, DE GNYIS KA'ANG BYANG SEMS KYI RGYUD LA YOD CING , DES NYAMS SU LEN DGOS PA'I PHYIR RO,

Someone may then ask, what the difference is between these two actual paths (for people of lesser and medium capacity) and those which are shared with them. The path shared with people of lesser capacity consists of the state of mind in which one aspires to reach the higher births by means of giving up bad deeds and accomplishing good ones. The path shared with those of medium capacity consists of the state of mind in which one aspires to reach freedom by developing the true desire to be free from the entire cycle of suffering. These two attitudes are also present in the mental continua of bodhisattvas, and they must put them into practice.

, GAL TE SKYES BU CHUNG 'BRING GI LAM GNYIS SKYES BU CHEN PO'I LAM GYI GOL SA YIN NA, DE'I GEGS SAM MI MTHUN PHYOGS YIN PA'I PHYIR 'TSANG RGYA BA'I THABS KYANG MA YIN PAR 'GYUR RO ZHE NA, SKYON MED DE, LAM DE GNYIS SKYES BU CHEN PO MYUR DU 'TSANG RGYA BA'I LAM GYI GOL SA YIN PAS DE 'TSANG RGYA BA'I THABS MA YIN KYANG , NYAN RANG RNAMS RIM GYIS RGYUD SMIN TE 'TSANG RGYA BA'I THABS SU 'GYUR BA LA 'GAL BA CI YANG MED PA'I PHYIR RO, , DE YANG RANG NYID GCIG PU ZHI BDE DON GNYER GYI BLO LTA BU LA GTZO BOR DGONGS PA'O,

Someone might then make the following objection. Suppose those two paths for people of lesser and medium capacity really are grave points of error for people of greater capacity. In that case, they would have to be an obstacle toward, or even in contradiction with, the path of the greater way. And then they could never constitute a method for reaching enlightenment. But the objection is unfounded. Those two paths do constitute a grave error in the path for people of greater capacity; they prevent these people from reaching enlightenment quickly. From this point of view then, these two paths are not a method for reaching enlightenment, but it's no contradiction at all to say that they constitute a method for reaching enlightenment, in the sense that they act to gradually ripen the

mental continua of listeners and "self-made" Buddhas. The point about being a grave error refers primarily to details such

as the state of mind where one aspires to reach a state of blissful peace for oneself alone.

,GNYIS PA LA GSUM, SKYES BU CHUNG NGU DANG THUN MONG BA'I LAM, 'BRING DANG THUN MONG BA'I LAM, CHEN PO'I LAM DNGOS SO,

The way to practice taking the essence of this life will be explained in three divisions: the path shared with people of lesser capacity, the path shared with people of medium capacity, and the actual path for people of greater capacity.

THE PATH SHARED WITH PEOPLE OF LESSER CAPACITY

,DANG PO LA GNYIS, PHYI MA DON GNYER GYI BLO BSKYED PA, PHYI MA'I BDE THABS BSTEN PA'O, , DANG PO LA GNYIS, 'CHI BA MI RTAG PA BSAM PA DANG , NGAN 'GRO'I SDUG BSNGAL BSAM PA'O,

The path shared with people of lesser capacity has two parts of its own: developing the state of mind in which you look ahead to your future lives, and how to make use of those methods which can bring you happiness in your future lives.

DEVELOPING THE STATE OF MIND WHICH LOOKS AHEAD TO FUTURE LIVES

Developing the state of mind which looks ahead to your future lives has two sections: the contemplation on your impermanence— the fact that you have to die, and the contemplation on the sufferings of the lower realms.

The Contemplation on Your Impermanence

The contemplation on your impermanence—the fact that you must die—is found in the following lines of the root text:

,RNYED DKA' 'JIG SLA NAM MKHA'I GLOG DANG 'DRA, ,TSUL 'DI BSAMS NAS 'JIG RTEN BYA BA KUN,

,SBUN PA 'PHYAR BA BZHIN DU RTOGS GYUR NAS, ,NYIN MTSAN KUN
TU SNYING PO LEN PA DGOS, ,RNAL 'BYOR NGAS KYANG NYAMS LEN
DE LTAR BGYIS, ,THAR 'DOD KHYED KYANG DE BZHIN BSKYANG 'TSAL
LO,

(12b)

**It's difficult to find, and easily destroyed
like lightning in the sky.
Think this over carefully,
and come to realize:
All the activities of the world
are chaff blown in the wind.
To take the essence of this life,
you must strive night and day.**

**I, the master meditator,
lived my life this way;
You, who seek for freedom,
must try to do the same.**

,DANG PO NI, RNYED DKA' 'JIG SLA SOGS BZHI STE, RGYU, NGO BO, DPE'I
SGO NAS RNYED PAR DKA' ZHING , 'CHI RKYEN MANG BAS 'JIG PAR SLA
BA NI, DPER NA, NAM MKHA'I GLOG MYUR DU 'JIG PA DANG 'DRA BA'I
TSUL 'DI BSAMS NAS DGRA 'DUL GNYEN SKYONG SOGS 'JIG RTEN GYI
BYA BA KUN DPER NA, SNYING PO MED PA'I SHUN PA'I SBUN PA 'PHYAR
BA BZHIN DU DON MED PAR RTOGS PAR GYUR NAS NYIN MTSAN KUN
TU RTEN 'DI LA SNYING PO LEN PA DGOS SO,

The *difficulty of finding* this life can be expressed from the point of view of its causes, its very nature, and certain metaphors. And because the things which can kill you are so many, this life is *easily destroyed*. *Carefully think over* the example of how quickly a flash of *lightning* disappears from *the sky*, and how your life is just *like* that. *All the activities of the world*—such as defeating your enemies and protecting your friends—are devoid of any real essence. Rather they are like the *chaff* or husk of grain *blown in the wind*. *Realizing* that these activities are meaningless, *you must then strive night and day to take the essence of this life*.

The Contemplation on the Sufferings of the Lower Realms

The contemplation on the suffering of the lower realms is expressed in the next line of the root text:

,SHI NAS NGAN 'GROR MI SKYE'I GDENG MED CING ,

(13a)

**There is no guarantee that after you die
you won't be born in the lower realms.**

,GNYIS PA NGAN 'GRO'I SDUG BSNAL BSAM PA NI, SHI NAS NGAN
'GROR MI SKYE ZHES PA STE, DE LTAR 'CHI BA MI RTAG PAR MA ZAD,
SHI NAS LAS DKAR NAG GNYIS KYIS JI LTAR 'PHANGS PA BZHIN SKYE
BA LEN DGOS LA, DE NI DGE BA'I LAS KYIS BDE 'GROR SKYE ZHING BDE
BA MYONG LA, MI DGE BA'I LAS KYIS NGAN 'GROR SKYE ZHING SDUG
BSNAGAL MYONG NGO , , BDAG GIS NI BDE 'GROR SKYE BA'I RGYU CHER
MA BSGRUBS LA, NGAN 'GROR SKYE BA'I NI MANG DU BSAGS SO, , DE'I
PHYIR NA PHYI MAR DMYAL BA LA SOGS PA NGAN 'GROR MI SKYE BA'I
GDENG THOB PA BDAG LA MED CING , MED PAR MA ZAD, DER SKYE
BSHUGS CHE'O SNYAM NAS NGAN 'GRO'I SDUG BSNAGAL YANG YANG
BSAMS TE DE LAS THAR 'DOD SHUGS CAN BSKYED DO,

Not only is it true that you are impermanent and must die, but *after you die* you must take birth exactly where your white and black deeds throw you. Good deeds throw you into the higher realms and bring you experiences of happiness, whereas bad deeds throw you into the lower realms and bring you experiences of suffering.

As you haven't been able to accumulate many causes to be born in the higher realms, but have rather collected many causes to be born in the lower realms, there is *no guarantee* that in your next life *you will not be born in the hells or the other lower realms*. Not only is there no guarantee that you will not be born there, in all likelihood you will be born there. Contemplate again and again the sufferings of the lower realms, and try to develop a very strong desire to be free from them.

The explanation of the methods for achieving happiness in your future lives has three sections: the teachings on going for refuge, along with certain advices concerning this practice; a description of the need to act properly with regard to what you should and should not be doing relative to the two kinds of deeds; and an explanation of the foundation for achieving the state of all-knowing.

Going for Refuge, and the Advices for this Practice

The next part of the root text concerns going for refuge and its advices:

,DE YI 'JIGS SKYOB DKON MCHOG GSUM DU NGES, ,DE PHYIR SKYABS 'GRO SHIN TU BRTAN PA DANG , ,DE YI BSLAB BYA NYAMS PA MED PAR BYA,

(13b)

**And it is precisely the Three Jewels
which protect you from these fears;
For that reason, taking refuge should be
something very firm,
And you should never allow the advices
concerning it to be broken.**

,GNYIS PA PHYI MA'I BDE THABS LA GSUM, SKYABS 'GRO BSLAB BYA DANG BCAS PA DANG , DE LA LAS GNYIS KYI BLANG DOR LA 'JUG DGOS PA DANG , RNAM MKHYEN SGRUB PA'I RTEN BSHAD PA'O, , DANG PO NI, DE YI 'JIGS SKYOB DKON MCHOG GSUM SOGS GSUM STE, DE LTAR LAS KYI DBANG GIS NGAN 'GROR LTUNG BAR 'GYUR BAS NGAN 'GRO DE YI 'JIGS PA LAS SKYOB PA'I SKYABS NI DKON MCHOG GSUM DU NGES SO, , DE YANG JI SKAD DU, SANGS RGYAS CHOS DANG DGE 'DUN TE, , THAR PA 'DOD PA RNAMS KYI SKYABS, , ZHES 'BYUNG BA LTAR, DKON MCHOG GSUM SO SO'I KHYAD PAR DANG YON TAN SHES PA'I SGO NAS SKYABS SU 'GRO DGOS SO, , 'GRO TSUL YANG SNYING THAG PA NAS DKON MCHOG GSUM LA 'KHOR BA DANG NGAN SONG GI SDUG BSNAL LAS SKYOB PA'I NUS PA YOD PAR YID CHES PA'I SGO NAS RE LTOS 'CHA' BA'I BLO BSKYED PA'O, , DE LTAR 'JIGS PA DE LAS SKYOB NUS PAR SHES NAS SKYOB PA DE'I PHYIR DU DE GSUM LA SKYABS SU SONG BA'I SKYABS 'GRO SHIN TU BSTEN PA DANG SKYABS 'GRO DE YI BSLAB BYA THUN MONG BA DANG THUN MONG MA YIN PA LAM RIM SOGS

NAS BSHAD PA LA NYAMS PA MED PAR BYA'O,

Thus by the power of your past deeds will you fall into the lower realms. The refuge *which can protect you from these fears of the lower realms is precisely the Three Jewels*. It is said in scripture that:

The refuge for those who desire freedom
Is the Buddha, the Dharma, and Community.

The point of this quotation is that you must go for refuge, through understanding the different characteristics and good qualities of each one of the Three Jewels. The way to go for refuge is first of all to develop the state of mind which believes that the Three Jewels possess the ability to protect you from the sufferings of the lower realms and the cycle of suffering. And then, from the bottom of your heart, you must put all of your faith in them. Once you have understood that these three do have the power to protect you from your fears, you should take yourself to them for refuge, in order to gain this protection. *Taking refuge should be something very firm in your mind*. As for the common and unique *advices which concern going for refuge as they are explained in the Steps of the Paths* and other books, you must be careful that you *never allow them to be broken*.

What to Take Up and What to Give Up

The need to act properly with regard to what you should and shouldn't be doing relative to the two kinds of deeds is expressed in these lines:

,DE YANG DKAR NAG LAS 'BRAS LEGS BSAMS NAS, ,BLANG DOR TSUL
BZHIN SGRUB LA RAG LAS SO, ,RNAL 'BYOR NGAS KYANG NYAMS LEN
DE LTAR BGYIS, ,THAR 'DOD KHYED KYANG DE BZHIN BSKYANG 'TSAL
LO,

(13c)

**Contemplate well upon white and black
deeds and their results,
Since this depends on acting properly,
towards what to do and not.**

I, the master meditator,

**lived my life this way;
You, who seek for freedom,
must try to do the same.**

,GNYSIS PA NI, DE YANG DKAR NAG LAS 'BRAS SOGS TE, DE YANG DAD PA LA SPYIR DANG BA'I DAD PA, YID CHES PA'I DAD PA, 'DOD PA'I DAD PA DANG GSUM YOD KYANG 'DIR NI GTZO BO YID CHES PA'I DAD PA STE, DKON MCHO G GIS SKYOB PA DE YANG LAS 'BRAS LA BLANG DOR PHYIN CI LOG TU BSGRUBS NA MI 'BYUNG BAS, DKAR PO DGE BA DANG NAG PO MI DGE BA'I LAS 'BRAS BU DANG BCAS PA JI LTAR YIN LEGS PAR BSAMS NAS DGE BA 'BRAS BU DANG BCAS PA LA BLANG BYA DANG , MI DGE 'BRAS BU DANG BCAS LA DOR BYAR BYED PA'I SGO NAS TSUL BZHIN DU SGRUB PA LA RAG LAS SO, , MDOR NA SANGS RGYAS KYIS DGE MI DGE SOGS LAS DANG 'BRAS BU JI LTAR GSUNGS PA LA YID CHES PA'I SGO NAS BLANG DOR BYED DGOS PA'I DON NO, , LHAG MA RJE BTZUN BLA MAS SOGS SLA'O,

Generally speaking there are three kinds of faith: faith in the form of admiration, faith in the form of belief, and faith in the form of hoping for something. Here we are principally concerned with faith in the form of belief. If you carry out your practice of the laws of cause and effect with a mistaken idea about what you should and should not do, then you won't get the protection of the Three Jewels. *Contemplate well upon the workings of deeds and their results, both white and black*—meaning virtuous and non-virtuous. Take up the practice of virtuous deeds and their consequences, and give up non-virtuous deeds and their consequences.

You must do so *since this* achieving protection successfully *depends on acting properly*. To put it briefly, you must first find belief in the statements of the Buddha where He described the workings of deeds and their consequences relating to virtue, non-virtue and so on. With this then you should carry out the practice of taking up what is right, and giving up what is not. The rest of the lines here, the ones that relate to the "venerable Lamas," are easily understood.

The Foundation for Achieving the State of All-Knowing

The explanation of the foundation for achieving the state of all-knowing has two points: the actual explanation, followed by notes on how to use the four forces.

The actual explanation is found in these lines of the root text:

,LAM MCHOOG SGRUB LA MTSAN NYID TSANG BA'I RTEN, ,MA RNYED
BAR DU SA PHYOD MI 'ONG BAS, ,DE YI MA TSANG MED PA'I RGYU LA
BSLAB,

(14a)

**A life should possess all the features needed
to reach the supreme path;
And until you find such a body and mind
you won't make leap and bounds.
Go then and learn all the causes which
prevent them from being incomplete.**

,GSUM PA LA GNYIS, DNGOS DANG , STOBS BZHI BSTEN TSUL LO, , DANG
PO NI, LAM MCHOOG SGRUB LA SOGS TE, KHYAD PAR DU LAM MCHOOG
RNAM MKHYEN SGRUB PA LA TSE RING BA KHA DOG BZANG BA SOGS
RNAM SMIN GYI RGYU BRGYAD SOGS MTSAN NYID TSANG BA'I RTEN CI
RIGS PA MA RNYED KYI BAR DU LAM SGRUB KYANG SA CHOD MI 'ONG
BAS, DE 'ONG BA'I CHED DU RTEN MTSAN NYID TSANG BA DE YI MA
TSANG MED PA'I RGYU SGRUB PA LA BSLAB PAR BYA'O, , RGYU NI
GZHAN GYI SROG SKYOB PA, RTEN LA MAR ME 'BUL BA SOGS MANG
NGO , , DE'I TSE LAS 'BRAS LA BLANG DOR CI THUB BYAS KYANG , BAG
MED PA DANG NYON MONGS MANG BA'I DBANG GIS NYES PA 'BYUNG
BAS SO,

In order specifically *to reach the supreme path*—that is, the state of all-knowing—you *should* have a *life* which *possesses all the necessary features*: qualities such as those eight factors which ripen from your past deeds. These eight include a long life, an attractive physical form, and so on. *Until you can find such a body and mind* you may try to practice the path, but *you will not be able to make any leaps and bounds* in your practice.

In order to get the kind of body and mind which has all those necessary characteristics, you have to *learn* how to bring about *the causes which would prevent them from being incomplete*. These causes are protecting others' lives and making offerings of light at altars, among many others.

At this point you may be doing whatever you can to follow the rules of deeds and their consequences, but because of carelessness or an attack of bad thoughts you may make slip up. The way of practicing the four forces is thus covered next in the root text:

,SGO GSUM SDIG LTUNG DRI MAS SBAGS PA 'DI, ,LHAG PAR LAS SGRIB
SBYONG BA GNAD CHE BAS, ,RGYUN DU STOBS BZHI TSANG BAR BSTEN
PA GCES, ,RNAL 'BYOR NGAS KYANG NYAMS LEN DE LTAR BGYIS, ,THAR
'DOD KHYED KYANG DE BZHIN BSKYANG 'TSAL LO,

(14b)

**Polluted by downfalls and the stench of bad deeds
committed through all three doors,
It's crucial to purify yourself, especially of
the obstacles these deeds create.
You must then with great reverence depend
on the four forces, continually.**

**I, the master meditator,
lived my life this way;
You, who seek for freedom,
must try to do the same.**

,GNYIS PA NI, SGO GSUM SDIG LTUNG SOGS TE, RANG CAG NI, LUS
NGAG YID KYI SGO GSUM LAS NYON SPYI DANG KHYAD PAR RANG
BZHIN GYI KHA NA MA THO BA'I SDIG PA DANG , BCAS PA'I KHA NA
MA THO BA'I LTUNG BA'I DRI MAS SBAGS PA 'DI NI, LAS DANG NYON
MONGS PA'I SGRIB PA GNYIS LAS LHAG PAR LAS KYI SGRIB PA SBYONG
BA GNAD CHE BAS NA, DUS RGYUN TU RTEN GYI STOBS DANG , SUN
'BYIN PA'I STOBS, SLAR LDOG PA'I STOBS, GNYEN PO KUN TU SPYOD PA'I
STOBS TE STOBS BZHI'I BSHAGS SDOM TSANG BAR BSTEN PAR GCES SO, ,
DRI MAS SBAGS PA 'DI ZHES GZHUNG MANG POR 'BYUNG BA LTAR
BYAS LA, CHOS SPYOD DU NI 'DIS ZHES 'BYUNG NGO , , STOBS BZHI'I
NGOS 'DZIN DANG BSHAGS TSUL RGYAS PAR GZHAN DU SHES PAR
BYA'O, , RJE BTZUN BLA MAS SOGS SNGAR BZHIN NO,

In general people like you and me are full of mental afflictions and the bad deeds which we have *committed through all the three doors* through which we express ourselves: our body, speech, and mind. More specifically, we are *polluted by the*

stench of both those bad deeds which are wrong by their own nature, and the downfalls or cases where we have transgressed the rules established by the Buddha. It is crucial that you purify yourself of the two different kinds of obstacles: those created by your bad deeds, those of your bad thoughts.

This is especially true of the obstacles that bad deeds create. You must depend upon all four of the forces involving confession and restraint, continually, in order to achieve this purification. These four are the force of the basis, the force of destruction, the force of turning away, and the force of the antidote. You should follow these four with great reverence.

The wording of the line about being "polluted" as it appears here follows a great number of versions of the text, and you should read it this way. Some liturgical works include a different particle of grammar which would make it sound like "purifying through the pollution."

You can find more details about each of the four forces, and the way in you should do your confessions, by referring to other relevant texts. The refrain here is the same as before.

,GNYIS PA SKYES BU 'BRING DANG THUN MONG BA'I LAM NYAMS SU
LEN TSUL GNYIS, SDUG KUN GNYIS KYI NYES DMIGS BSAM DGOS PA'I
RGYU MTSAN DANG , BSAM TSUL DNGOS SO,

THE PATH SHARED WITH PEOPLE OF MEDIUM CAPACITY

The method for putting into practice the steps of the path shared with people of medium capacity has two parts: the reasons why it is necessary to contemplate what's wrong with the truth of suffering and the truth of the source of suffering; and then the actual contemplation.

WHY YOU MUST CONTEMPLATE
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE FIRST TWO TRUTHS

The reasons why it is necessary to contemplate what's wrong with the truths of suffering and its source are indicated in the following verse of the root text:

,SDUG BDEN NYES DMIGS BSAM LA MA 'BAD NA,

,THAR PA DON GNYER JI BZHIN MI SKYE ZHING , ,KUN 'BYUNG 'KHOR
BA'I 'JUG RIM MA BSAMS NA, , 'KHOR BA'I RTZA BA GCOD TSUL MI SHES
PAS,

(15a)

**If you don't make efforts to contemplate
what's wrong with the truth of suffering,
You won't be able to develop as you should
the aspiration to be free.
And if you don't think of how the truth of the source
throws you into the cycle of life,
Then you won't understand the way to cut
the cycle of suffering from its root.**

,DANG PO NI, SDUG BDEN NYES DMIGS SOGS TE, 'KHOR BA LAS THAR
BAR 'DOD PAS THOG MAR SDUG KUN GNYIS KYI NYES DMIGS BSAM
DGOS TE, NGAN SONG GSUM GYI SDUG BSNAL DANG BDE 'GRO'I SDUG
BSNGAL SPYI DANG BYE BRAG SKYE RGA NA 'CHI SOGS SDUG BSNAL
BDEN PAS BSDUS PA'I 'KHOR BA'I NYES DMIGS BSAM PA LA MA 'BAD NA
NI, SDUG BSNAL LAS THAR 'DOD MED PAR THAR PA DON GNYER GYI
BLO JI LTA BA BZHIN MI SKYE ZHING , 'DOD CHAGS SOGS KYI NGO BO
SKYE TSUL JI LTAR YIN PA'I KHYAD PAR SHES PA'I SGO NAS KUN
'BYUNG BDEN PA 'KHOR BA'I 'JUG RIM TU 'GRO TSUL MA BSAMS NA,
'BEN MA MTHONG BAR MDA' 'PHANGS PA BZHIN 'KHOR BA'I RTZA BA
GCOD TSUL MI SHES PAS SO,

From the very beginning, those who wish to free themselves from cyclic existence must contemplate what's wrong with the truth of suffering and the truth of the source of suffering. *The truth of suffering* includes both the general sufferings of the three lower realms and the higher realms, as well as the specific sufferings of birth, old age, aging, sickness, death, and so on.

If you don't make great efforts to contemplate what's wrong with this cycle of suffering, then you will not get any great wish to be free from suffering, and you will not be able to develop the state of mind in which you aspire toward freedom in the way that you should.

You must understand the details of the nature of desire and the other (mental afflictions), and how they develop, because *if you don't think about how the truth of*

the source of suffering acts to throw you into the cycle of life, then you won't understand how to cut the very root of the cycle of suffering. It would be like shooting an arrow at a target you can't see.

THE ACTUAL CONTEMPLATION

,GNYIS PA LA GNYIS, SDUG BSNAL 'KHOR BA'I NYES DMIGS DANG ,
KUN 'BYUNG GI 'KHOR BA'I 'JUG RIM BSAM PA'O,

The actual contemplation on the problems of the first two truths has two parts: the contemplation on the truth of suffering—the problems of the cycle of life, and the contemplation on the truth of the source of suffering—how it is that we are thrown into this cycle of life.

The Contemplation on the Truth of Suffering

These lines of the root text indicate the contemplation of the truth of suffering:

,SRID LAS NGES 'BYUNG SKYO SHAS BRTAN PA DANG ,

(15b)

**With a solid disgust for this existence
that definitely wants to get out,**

,DANG PO NI, SRID LAS NGES 'BYUNG SOGS TE, 'KHOR BA'I GNAS SU
SKYE RGA NA 'CHI BZHI DANG MYA NGAN DANG SMRE SNGAGS 'DON
PA YID MI BDE BA DANG TSA GRANG 'THAB RTZOD SOGS KYI SDUG
BSNAGAL RNAMS MTHONG NAS SRID PA 'KHOR BA LAS NGES PAR
'BYUNG 'DOD KYI SKYO SHAS DRAG PO BSTEN PA DANG , 'CHAD 'GYUR
LTAR SDUG BSNAGAL DE BSKYED PA'I RGYU YANG SHES PAR BYA'O,

Look at all of the suffering in this circle of life; look at birth, aging, sickness and death, at grief and crying out in pain, at our mental unhappiness, at the heat and the cold, all the fighting, and on and on. Then *with a fierce and solid disgust for this existence that definitely wants to get out* of the cycle of suffering you must try to understand the cause which creates this suffering, as it will be explained later in the text.

The Contemplation on the Truth of the Source

The contemplation on the truth of the source of suffering is expressed here in the root text:

, 'KHOR BAR GANG GIS BCINGS PA SHES PA GCES, , RNAL 'BYOR NGAS
KYANG NYAMS LEN DE LTAR BGYIS, , THAR 'DOD KHYED KYANG DE
BZHIN BSKYANG 'TSAL LO,

(15c)

**Finding out about this suffering cycle
should be treated with great concern.**

**I, the master meditator,
put this into practice;
You, who seek for freedom, must
try to practice this way.**

, GNYIS PA NI, 'KHOR BAR GANG GIS SOGS TE, 'KHOR BAR 'CHING BA
BYED GANG GIS BCINGS PA SHES PA GCES PA STE GAL CHE'O, , 'CHING
BYED LA LAS NYON GNYIS TE KHYAD PAR PHYE NA MANG YANG, DON
BSGRIL NA SO SKYE'I RGYUD KYI 'DOD CHAGS KHONG KHRO NGA
RGYAL MA RIG PA THE TSOM NYON MONGS CAN PHRAG DOG SOGS
NYON MONGS THAMS CAD NI NYON MONGS PA'I KUN 'BYUNG BDEN
PA YIN LA, NYON MONGS DES KUN NAS BSLANGS PA'I LAS DGE MI DGE
GANG YIN KYANG LAS KYI KUN 'BYUNG BDEN PA YIN NO,

Finding out about what chains you to this suffering cycle should be treated as something extremely important and with great concern. You are chained by both your deeds and your bad thoughts. If we were to divide these out into all of their different forms, there would be a great many of them. To state it in a nutshell, the mental afflictions in the mindstream of a common person—that is, desire, anger, pride, ignorance, bad forms of doubt, jealousy, and so on—are all the truth of the source of suffering in the form of mental afflictions, and the deeds which are motivated by them—both virtuous and non-virtuous—are the truth of the source of suffering in the form of deeds.

,DE YANG GTZO BO MA RIG PA'I DBANG GIS LAS BSAGS LAS KYI DBANG GIS 'KHOR BAR 'JUG PA'I RTEN 'BREL YAN LAG BCU GNYIS KYI RIM PA LEGS PAR SHES SHING , MDOR NA LAS DANG NYON MONGS GNYIS KYI DBANG GIS 'KHOR BAR 'KHOR TSUL RNAMS BLA MA'I MAN NGAG LA BR TEN NAS SHES PA NI, KUN 'BYUNG 'KHOR BA'I 'JUG RIM SHES PA'O,

It is mainly because of our ignorance that we collect these deeds, and it is because of the deeds themselves that we are thrown into the cycle of life. We must gain a good understanding of all the steps in the twelve links of dependent origination, through which this process takes place.

To put it briefly, you must rely on the personal instructions of a spiritual guide, and thus come to realize how it is that your deeds and your bad thoughts make you circle around in this cycle of life. Then you will understand the truth of the source—the process through which you are thrown into cyclic life.

, 'KHOR BA'I RTZA BA GCOD TSUL NI BDAG MED RTOGS PA'I SHES RAB KYIS MA RIG PA'I ZHEN YUL LEGS PAR SUN PHYUNG BA'I TSUL GYIS GOMS PAR BYAS PA'I MTHAR MA RIG PA SPANGS PA NA 'KHOR BA'I RTZA BA BCAD CING , NYON MONGS GZHAN THAMS CAD KYANG ZHOR LA SBYONG BAR 'GYUR BA YIN NO,

The way to cut the very root of this cycle is with the wisdom which perceives the lack of a "self." You use this wisdom to invalidate the object in which ignorance believes, and by the time you familiarize yourself with this process fully you are able to eliminate this ignorance, and thus cut the root of the cycle of suffering. When ignorance is eliminated, all the other mental afflictions are by the way removed themselves.

,SDUG KUN GNYIS KYI NANG NAS KUN 'BYUNG SPANGS NA SHING RTZA BA BCAD NA BSKAMS 'GRO BA LTAR SDUG BSNAL YANG SPONG BAR 'GYUR BA GZHUNG CHEN PO RNAMS KYI DGONGS PA YIN MOD, DENG SANG GI LAS DANG PO BAS NI, NYON MONGS RTZA BA NAS SPONG MI NUS PAS, STOBBS BZHI'I BSHAGS PA LA BR TEN NAS KUN 'BYUNG GI NANG TSAN SDIG LTUNG RNAMS SPONG BA GNAD CHE'O,

If between the pair of the truth of suffering and the truth of the source of suffering you are able to eliminate the truth of the source, then you will also be able to remove the truth of the source of suffering; if you cut the root of the plant, for example, the plant itself dies.

Although this is the ultimate intent of the great scriptures, us spiritual beginners nowadays are unable to eliminate our mental afflictions from their root. It is therefore a very crucial point that we eliminate that part of the source of suffering which is composed of our bad deeds and downfalls by using the method of purification which involves the four forces.

,KHYAD PAR DU TSUL KHRIMS KYI BSLAB PA SOGS GSUM LA 'BAD DGOS LA, TSUL KHRIMS KYI BSLAB PA NI GTZO BO'I DBANG DU BYAS NA MI DGE BA BCU SPONG BA'I SPONG SEMS YIN LA, TING NGE 'DZIN GYI BSLAB PA'I GTZO BO NI ZHI GNAS YIN MOD, DER MA NGES TE DGE BA'AM YANG DAG PA'I DMIGS PA LA RING THUNG GANG YIN YANG RTZE GCIG TU GNAS PA'I SEMS PA RNAMS TING NGE 'DZIN GYI BSLAB PAS BSDUS SO,

Most especially we have to exert ourselves in the three trainings of morality, [concentration, and wisdom.] The principal element involved in the training of morality is the state of mind which wants to give up performing the ten bad deeds. The principal element in the training of concentration is the high meditative state called quietude, however it is not the only element involved. The mental ability to place your mind one-pointedly for any length of time you desire on some kind of pure or virtuous object is also included into the training of concentration.

,SHES RAB KYI BSLAB PA'I GTZO BO NI LHAG MTHONG YIN KYANG , DER MA NGES TE, BDAG MED PHRA RAGS CI RIGS LA DPYOD PA'I RIGS PA DON MTHUN RNAMS DANG , CHOS KYI TSIG DON GZHAN LA'ANG LEGS PAR DPYOD PA'I SHES RAB RNAMS NI SHES RAB KYI BSLAB PAR 'DUS SO,

The main element in the training of wisdom is what we call "special vision," although it is not the only thing involved. Also included in the training of wisdom is the intelligence which is able to examine, in a thorough way, the correct reasonings which examine any of the varying levels of the lack of "self", as well as the kinds of wisdom which examine the meanings of any Buddhist texts or teachings.

THE ACTUAL PATH FOR PEOPLE OF GREATER CAPACITY

,GSUM PA SKYES BU CHEN PO'I LAM GYI RIM PA LA GNYIS, SPYOD PA'I RTEN SEMS BSKYED DANG , SPYOD PA LA BSLAB TSUL LO , , DANG PO LA

GNYIS LAS, DANG PO KHYAD CHOS SAM PHAN YON NI, SEMS BSKYED
THEG MCHO G SOGS BZHI STE,

The method for putting into practice the steps of the path for people of greater capacity has two parts: developing the wish for enlightenment which is the basis for bodhisattva activities, and then training yourself in the activities themselves.

THE WISH FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

The explanation of the wish for enlightenment, the basis of a bodhisattva's activities, includes two sections.

Special Features or Benefits of the Wish for Enlightenment

First I will explain the special features, or benefits of the wish for enlightenment, as expressed in the following lines of the root text:

,SEMS BSKYED THEG MCHO G LAM GYI GZHUNG SHING STE, ,RLABS
CHEN SPYOD PA RNAMS KYI GZHI DANG RTEN, ,TSO G S GNYIS KUN LA
GSER 'GYUR RTZI LTA BU, ,RAB 'BYAMS DGE TSO G S SDUD PA'I BSOD
NAMS GTER,

(16a)

**The wish for enlightenment is the central beam
which holds up the supreme way's path;
It's also the foundation and the basis
of a bodhisattva's mighty activity.
It is like the elixir of an alchemist
for both of the two great masses,
And a treasury of merit containing the collections
of a myriad number of virtues.**

THEG CHEN SEMS BSKYED NI, THEG MCHO G LAM GYI GZHUNG SHING
LTA BU STE, SBYIN DRUG SOGS RLABS CHEN SPYOD PA RNAMS KYI SKYE
BA DANG GNAS PA DANG 'PHEL BA'I GZHI DANG RTEN YIN LA, BSOD
NAMS DANG YE SHES KYI TSO G S GNYIS KUN RDZO G S BYANG DU SGYUR
BAR BYED PA LA, LCAGS KHAMS GSER DU SGYUR BAR BYED PA'I GSER
'GYUR GYI RTZI LTA BU DANG , RAB 'BYAMS DGE TSO G S MANG PO SDUD

PA'I BSOD NAMS KYI GTER CHEN PO'O, , GZHUNG 'DIS SEMS DE BSKYED
DGOS PA'I RGYU MTSAN YANG BSTAN LA, GZHI DANG RTEN ZHES PAS
THEG CHEN SEMS BSKYED DE, THEG CHEN LAM GYI 'JUG SGOR YANG
BSTAN TO, ,

The wish for enlightenment as it is found in the greater way is like the central beam which holds up the path of the supreme way. It is the foundation and basis which allows the mighty bodhisattva activities of giving, and the rest of the six perfections, and other such activities to come into being, to remain, and likewise to increase.

Like an alchemical elixir that acts to transform a piece of ordinary iron into gold, this wish transforms both of the two great masses of merit and wisdom into total enlightenment. It is also a great treasury which contains many great collections of a myriad number of virtues.

In his text, Je Tsongkapa not only indicates the reasons why we must develop the wish for enlightenment, but with the words "foundation and basis" he also shows us that this wish for enlightenment as it is found in the greater way is the very door for entering the path of the greater way.