

[*The Key that Unlocks the Door to the Noble Path* (Lam bzang sgo 'byed) written by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-91), a commentary upon the *Three Principal Paths* (Lam-gtzo rnam-gsum) of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), folios 1a-5b.]

*,, RDO RJE 'CHANG PHA BONG KHA PA DPAL BZANG POS LAM GTZO'I
ZAB BZHI PA LTA BA'I DPYAD PA RDZOGS PA'I TSAD NI, KHRID STZAL
SKABS KYI GSUNG BSHAD ZIN BRIS LAM BZANG SGO 'BYED CES BYA BA
BZHUGS SO,,

*Herein kept is the "Key that Unlocks the Door
to the Noble Path,"[7] a record that was made
when teachings on the Three Principal Paths
were imparted by the glorious Pabongka Rinpoche,
the Holder of the Diamond.[8]*

**,, NA MO GU RU MANYDZU GOH sh'A YA,

*"Namo guru Manjugoshaya" —
I bow to the Master of Wisdom, whose name is Gentle Voice.*

,RGYAL KUN GSANG GSUM GCIG BSDUS NGUR SMRIG GAR,
,MTSUNGS MED DRIN CAN BLA MA LA BTUD DE,
,JAM DBYANGS ZHAL LUNG LAM GTZO RNAM GSUM GYI,
,ZIN THO NYUNG NGUR BRI LA 'DIR BRTZON BYA,

*I bow first to my teacher, who out of unmatched
kindness masquerades
In the saffron robe,[9] though in truth he's the
secret three of every Victor.[10]
Next I pledge I'll try to write here some
brief notes in explanation
Of the verses taught by Gentle Voice[11]
himself: "Three Principal Paths." [12]*

THE PRELIMINARIES

I. The Lama and the Word

,DE LA, RAB 'BYAMS RGYAL BA MA LUS PA'I MKHYEN BRTZE NUS GSUM
GCIG TU BSDUS PA'I RANG GZUGS, BDAG CAG MCHOG DMAN BAR MA'I

'GRO BA YONGS KYI MA 'DRIS PA'I MDZA' BSHES GCIG PU, SNYIGS DUS
KYI 'KHOR LO'I MGON GCIG RJE BTZUN BLA MA KHYAB BDAG PHA
BONG KHA'I RDO RJE 'CHANG CHEN PO BKA' DRIN MTSUNGS ZLA MED
PA MCHOOG GI ZHAL SNGA NAS,

Now there was a lama, who was the very image of all the knowledge, love, and power of every single one of the absolute myriad of Buddhas. All in one person. Even for those who had never met him he was the single greatest friend that any of them, high or humble, could ever hope to have. He stood at the center of our universe, the holy Lama, one and only protector of all around him in these degenerate days. He was the great Holder of the Diamond, Pabongka Rinpoche, whose kindness knew no match. And from his holiest lips he spoke a teaching.

DUS GSUM SANGS RGYAS THAMS CAD KYI BSTAN PA'I SNYING PO
BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA'I YANG SNYING , 'JAM DBYANGS BLA
MA'I LEGS GSUNG GI BDUD RTZI LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM GSUM GYI
ZAB KHRID RTZA TSIG GI STENG NAS ZAB CING GNAD 'DRIL BA DGYES
PA CHEN POS SNGA PHYIR STZAL BA RNAMS BRJED PAR PHANGS TE
DRAN THO GANG ZIN THOR BU 'GA' ZHIG PHYOGS GCIG TU DGOD PA
LA,

He spoke of the very heart of the "Steps to Buddhahood," a teaching which is itself the heart of all that is taught by each and every Buddha, of the past or present or future. He spoke of the Three Principal Paths, the nectar essence of all the wonderful words ever uttered by the Master, Gentle Voice, has ever uttered.

Over the years, Pabongka Rinpoche imparted this profound instruction to us a number of times. He followed the original verses closely and savored the teaching well, wrapping within it every deep and vital point. Fearing we would forget some part we took down notes, and have gathered a number of them together from various sources, to make a single work.

II. Why Learn the Three Principal Paths?

'O LAGS SO, DE YANG NI JI SKAD DU, KHAMS GSUM CHOS KYI RGYAL PO
TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO'I GSUNG LAS, DAL BA'I RTEN 'DI YID BZHIN
NOR LAS LHAG, CES SOGS LAS BRTZAMS PA'I SNGON 'GRO'I GSUNG
BSHAD LAM YONGS RDZOGS DANG 'BREL BAR

Pabongka Rinpoche opened his teaching with introductory remarks that started

off from a number of lines by the great Tsongkapa, King of the Dharma[13] in all three realms.[14] The first one read, "More than a wishing jewel, this life of opportunity." [15] By using these lines, the Rinpoche was able to tie his opening remarks to the entire path from beginning to end, summarizing a number of important points in brief.

KUN SLONG BCOS TSUL RGYUD 'KHUL NGES DANG , LHAG PAR SNOD KYI SKYON GSUM SPONG , 'DU SHES DRUG BSTEN TE NYAN LUGS DANG , SNOD KYI SKYON DRI MA CAN THOG MAR GSUNGS PA 'DI CHOS NYAN PA TZAM DU MA ZAD BSAM SGOM GZHAN LA'ANG GAL CHE TSUL SOGS MDOR BSDUS RE STZAL TE,

These began with the need for us in the audience to truly try to change our hearts, and listen to the teaching with the purest of motivations. We were to avoid with special care the three famous "problems of the pot," [16] and to follow the practice where you use six images for the instruction. [17] Here Pabongka Rinpoche detailed for us the various points; he said, for example, that he spoke first about how we should avoid the problem of being like a dirty pot because a good motivation was important not only for our classroom hours, but essential too for the steps of contemplation and meditation that should follow the initial period of instruction.

DUS GSUM GYI RGYAL BA THAMS CAD KYANG GANG NAS GSHEGS PA'I LAM PO CHE, SA GSUM GYI SGRON ME GCIG PU NI BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA NYID YIN CING , DE'I SNYING PO'AM SROG LTA BU NI LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM GSUM YIN LA,

Now there is a great highway along which each and every Buddha of the three times travels. It is the single guiding lamp for living beings in all three lands. [18] It is none other than the teaching known as the "Steps to Buddhahood." And the heart, the very life of this teaching, is the instruction on the three principal paths.

DE YANG GZHAN DON DU 'TSANG RGYA BA LA SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG DE BSGRUB DGOS, DE BSGRUB PA LA SGRUB TSUL SHES DGOS, DE LA CHOS THOS DGOS, THOS PA DE YANG LAM MA NOR BA ZHIG LA BYED DGOS PA YIN PAS

We would all like to become Buddhas so we could help others; but to do so, we have to work to achieve this state. To do this though we have to know how. And to know how, we must study the dharma. The study that we do, moreover, must

center on a path that never errs.

DA LAM 'DIR 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN POS DRANG DON GDUL
BYA'I SNANG NGOR SHAR PHYOGS RGYAL MO RONG DU TSA KHO
DBON PO NGAG DBANG GRAGS PA LA GNANG BA'I LAM GYI GTZO BO
RNAME GSUM GYI RTZA TSIG 'DI'I STENG NAS ZAB KHRID MDOR BSDUS
TZAM 'BUL BA SKABS SU BAB PA YIN,

This brings us to our present text, the *Three Principal Paths*, which was composed by the protector Gentle Voice as he appeared to his disciples in the form of a man—the great Tsongkapa. He granted the teaching to Ngawang Drakpa, a friar from Tsako district, out to the east in Gyamo Valley.[19] We will offer just a brief account of this profound work, following the words of each verse.

LAM GTZO 'DIR LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAME GSUM DANG , LAM RIM LA
SKYES BU GSUM ZHES MTSAN 'DOGS LUGS DANG SA BCAD KYI KHYAD
PAR TZAM LAS DON LAM RIM DANG 'DRA YANG , SA BCAD PHYE TSUL
GYIS KHRID RGYUN ZUR DU MDZAD PA RED,

Here we speak of the "three principal paths," while in the teaching on the steps to Buddhahood we talk of practitioners of "three different scopes." [20] Aside from this distinction in the names we give them, and some differences in their section divisions, the teachings on the three principal paths and those on the steps to Buddhahood are essentially the same. A separate teaching tradition has developed for the present text because of the different categories it employs for the very same subject matter.

LAM GTZO GSUM NI MDO SNGAGS KYI CHOS GANG BYED KYANG LAM
GYI SROG SHING LTA BU YIN PAS NGES PAR 'DI GSUM GYI RTZIS ZIN PA
ZHIG DGOS, DE YANG NGES 'BYUNG GI RTZIS ZIN NA THAR PA'I RGYU
DANG , BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS KYI RTZIS ZIN NA THAMS CAD MKHYEN
PA'I RGYU DANG , YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA'I RTZIS ZIN NA 'KHOR BA'I
GNYEN POR 'GRO BA YIN,

The three principal paths are like the main beam that supports all the rest of the roof; your mind must be filled with these three thoughts if you hope to practice any dharma at all, whether it be the open or the secret teachings of the Buddha. A mind caught up in renunciation leads you to freedom, and a mind filled with hopes of becoming a Buddha for the sake of every living being brings you to the state of omniscience. A mind imbued with correct view, finally, serves as the

antidote for the cycle of life.

GZHAN DU NA BSOD NAMS MA YIN PA'I MI DGE BA'I LAS KYIS NGAN
'GRO DANG , BSOD NAMS KYI LAS KYIS 'DOD KHAMS KYI LHA MI, MI G-
YO BA'I LAS KYIS GZUGS GZUGS MED KYI LHAS SKYE, LAM GTZO GSUM
GYIS MA ZIN NA, RTZA RLUNG THIG LE, PHYAG CHEN, RDZOGS CHEN,
BSKYED RDZOGS SOGS GA 'DRA ZHIG BSGOM LO BYAS KYANG DE
THAMS CAD 'KHOR BA'I RGYU LAS, THAR PA DANG THAMS CAD
MKHYEN PA'I RGYUR PHYOGS TZAM DU YANG MI 'GRO STE,

Otherwise you can do non-virtuous deeds, what we call "non-merit," and take a birth in one of the lives of misery.[21] Deeds of "merit" will only lead you to birth as a man, or a pleasure-being of the desire realm. The deeds we call "invariable" will take you as far as a pleasure being of the form or formless realms. You can pretend to practice anything—the Channels and Winds and Drops, the Great Seal, the Great Completion, the Creation and Completion, whatever.[22] But unless the three principal paths fill your thoughts, each of these profound practices can only bring you back to the cycle of birth—they can't even begin to lead you to freedom, or to the state of knowing all.

DGE BSHES PHU CHUNG BAS SPYAN SNGA BA LA, RIG PA'I GNAS LNGA
LA MKHAS, TING NGE 'DZIN BRTAN PO THOB, MNGON SHES LNGA
DANG LDAN, GRUB CHEN BRGYAD THOB PA GCIG DANG , JO BO'I MAN
NGAG 'DI RGYUD LA JI LTA BA BZHIN MA SKYES KYANG , 'DI LA NGES
SHES BRTAN PO GZHAN GYIS BLO BSGYUR DU MI BTUB PA GNYIS,
KHYOD GANG LA 'DAM ZHES GSUNG BA LA,

We find it in the question that Geshe Puchungwa asked of Chen-ngawa:[23]
"Let's say on the one hand that you could be one of those people who has
mastered all five sciences,[24] who has gained the firmest of single-pointed
concentration, someone with each of the five types of clairvoyance,[25] who's
experienced all eight of the great attainments.[26] And let's say on the other hand
that you could be a person who had yet to gain any full realization of Lord
Atisha's teachings,[27] but who nonetheless had developed such a firm
recognition of their truth that no one else could ever change your mind. Which of
the two would you choose to be?"

SPYAN SNGA BA'I ZHAL NAS, SLOB DPON, NGAS LAM GYI RIM PA
RGYUD LA SKYES PA LTA ZHOG, LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI TZUG YIN SNYAM
DU KHA PHYOGS TZAM DU GO BA YANG 'DI LA 'DAM STE,

And Chen-ngawa spoke in reply, "My master, leave alone any hope of realizing all the steps to Buddhahood—I would rather even to be a person who had just begun to get some glint of understanding, who could say to himself that he had started off on the first of these steps to Buddhahood.

RIG PA'I GNAS LNGA LA MKHAS PA DANG , TING NGE 'DZIN LA BSKAL
PA'I BAR DU MNYAM PAR BZHAG THUB PA DANG , MNGON PAR SHES
PA LNGA DANG LDAN PA DANG , GRUB PA CHEN PO BRGYAD THOB PA
DE RNAMS SNGON CHAD GRANGS MED PA ZHIG BYAS KYANG 'KHOR
BA LAS MA 'DAS MA 'PHAGS, JO BO'I BYANG CHUB LAM RIM LA NGES PA
RNYED NA NGES PAR 'KHOR BA LAS BZLOG STE MCHI ZHES GSUNGS PA
DANG ,

"Why would this be my choice? In all my lives to now I've been a master of the five sciences, countless times. And countless times I've gained single- pointed concentration, even to where I could sit in meditation for an eon. The same with the five types of clairvoyance—and the eight great attainments. But never have I been able to go beyond the circle of life—never have I risen above it. If I were able to gain a realization of the steps to Buddhahood that Atisha taught, I would surely be able to turn from this round of births."

GZHAN YANG , BRAM ZE'I KHYE'U TZA NA KYA DANG , KYE RDO RJE'I
RNAL 'BYOR PA SOGS KYI SNGON BYUNG LO RGYUS LTAR YIN, RJE
BTZUN 'JAM PA'I DBYANGS KYIS 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO
LA, 'KHOR BA'I NYES DMIGS DANG THAR PA'I PHAN YON MTHONG BA'I
DRAN SHES NA RE BSTEN NAS SNANG SHAS LA BLO 'GROR MI STER BAR
SRID PA'I MTSANG BCAR ZHING , THAR PA'I PHAN YON LA SEMS 'DZIN
PA'I DMIGS RNAM GOMS NAS NGES 'BYUNG LA MYONG BA MA BTON
PAR SBYIN PA,

The same point is conveyed by the stories of the Brahmin's son by the name of Tsanakya,[28] the master meditator of the practice called "Lo Diamond,"[29] and others as well. The lord Gentle Voice said it to our protector, the great Tsongkapa:

Suppose you fail to devote some part of your practice to thinking over the various problems of cyclic life, and the different benefits of freedom from it. You don't sit down and meditate, keeping your mind on trying to open your eyes to the ugliness of life, or holding

it on the wonders of freedom. You don't reach the point where you never give a thought to the present life. You never master the art of renunciation.

TSUL KHRIMS, BZOD PA, BRTZON 'GRUS, BSAM GTAN GYI DGE RTZA
GANG GOMS KYANG THAR PA'I RGYUR GTAN NAS MI 'GRO BAS THAR
'DOD KYIS THOG MAR GDAMS NGAG GANG ZAB ZER BA GZHAN THAMS
CAD BZHAG NAS NGES 'BYUNG LA RTOG BSGOM BYA DGOS,

And let's say you go out then and try to develop a skill in some great virtuous practice—the perfection of giving, or that of morality, or forbearance, effort, or staying in concentration.[30] It doesn't matter what. None of it can ever lead you on to the state of freedom. People who really long for freedom then should forget at first about all those other supposedly so deep advices. They should use the "mental review" meditation to develop renunciation.

THEG CHEN SGRUB PA POS RANG DON YID BYED KYI SKYON DANG ,
GZHAN DON GYI PHAN YON LA DRAN SHES THUN RE BSTEN NAS SEMS
BSKYED LA MYONG BA 'DON PA'I DMIGS RNAM NAS GOMS PAR MA
BYAS NA GZHAN GANG BYAS KYANG LAM DU MI 'GYUR TE,

People who are trying to practice the greater way should set aside some regular periods of time for considering how harmful it is to concentrate on your own welfare, and how much good can come from concentrating on the welfare of others. Eventually these thoughts can become habitual; nothing that you ever do without them will ever turn to a path that leads you anywhere.

GZHAN DU NA DGE RTZA RNAMS RANG DON YID BYED KYIS DBANG
BYAS NAS DMAN PA'I BYANG CHUB KYI RGYU 'BA' ZHIG TU 'GYUR BA'I
PHYIR TE, DPER NA NGES 'BYUNG LA DRAN SHES BSTEN PA'I DMIGS
RNAM GOMS PAR MA BYAS NA DGE BA THAMS CAD SNANG SHAS KYIS
DBANG BYAS NAS 'KHOR BA 'BA' ZHIG GI RGYU BYED PA BZHIN NO, ,

Virtues performed the other way are altered by the fact that you are doing them for yourself—so all they can do in the end is bring you to what is known as a "lower enlightenment." This is similar to what happens when you are unable to practice the various aspects of renunciation deeply because you have failed to devote some

time to thinking about it—every virtue you do is affected by your concern for this present life, and only leads you back to the cycle of birth.

DES NA SNGAGS LA SOGS PA'I GDAMS NGAG GANG ZAB ZER BA RNAMS
BZHAG NAS THOG MAR NGES 'BYUNG DANG BYANG SEMS LA MYONG
BA THON PA RE NGES PAR BYA DGOS,

It's a definite necessity then first to gain fluency in the attitudes of renunciation and the desire to achieve Buddhahood for every living being; so set aside for the time being all those supposedly profound practices, the secret teachings and so on.

SKYES PA DANG DE NAS DGE BA THAMS CAD THAR PA DANG THAMS
CAD MKHYEN PA'I RGYUR DBANG MED DU 'GRO BAS, DES NA 'DI LA
SGOM RIN MI CHOG PAR BYED PA NI LAM GYI GNAD GTAN NAS MA
SHES PA YIN GSUNGS,

Once you've managed to develop these attitudes, every single virtuous act you perform leads you, despite yourself, to freedom and the state where you know all things. Therefore it's a sign of total ignorance about the very crux of the path when a person doesn't consider these thoughts worth his meditation time.[31]

RTOG SGOM ZHES DPYAD SGOM BYED PA LA BYA, LAM GYI GTZO BO
RNAME GSUM 'DI NI RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB THAMS CAD KYI SNYING
PO'I BCUD PHYUNG BA STE, DE YANG GSUNG RAB DGONGS 'GREL
DANG BCAS PA'I DON SKYES BU GSUM GYI LAM RIM DU 'DU, DE BYANG
CHUB LAM GYI RIM PAR 'DU, DE LAM GTZO GSUM DU 'DUS PA YIN,

What we mean above by "mental review" meditation is the type of meditation where you choose a particular line of thought and analyze it. Now the three principal paths are the top of the cream skimmed from all the holy words that the Buddhas have uttered. You see, the meanings of these words and the commentaries upon them have all been packed into the teaching on the paths for practitioners of three different scopes. And this teaching has all been packed further, into the teaching on the steps to Buddhahood. This teaching, in turn, has been packed into that of the three principal paths.

'O NA DE 'DU LUGS JI LTAR YIN SNYAM NA, GSUNG RAB DGONGS 'GREL

DANG BCAS PA'I DON MTHA' DAG GDUL BYA RNAMS SANGS RGYAS
THOB PA'I THABS 'BA' ZHIG TU GSUNGS SHING , DE THOB PAR BYED PA
LA RGYU THABS SHES GNYIS LA BSLAB DGOS PAS, DE GNYIS KYI GTZO
BO NI, BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS DANG YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA GNYIS
YIN, DE GNYIS RGYUD LA SKYE BA LA THOG MAR RANG NYID 'KHOR
BA'I PHUN TSOGS LA YANG ZHEN PA GTING NAS LOG STE

How is each packed into the next? Every single thought expressed in the holy words of the Buddhas, and in the commentaries which explain them, was uttered for the sole purpose of helping disciples to attain the state of Buddhahood. To achieve this state, one must verse himself in the two causes that bring it about: we call them "method" and "wisdom." The main elements of these two causes are also two: the desire to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all living beings, and correct view. To develop these attitudes in the stream of one's mind, a person must first gain an absolute disgust for all the apparent good things of the life he himself is spending in the circle of births.

RANG 'KHOR BA LAS THAR 'DOD KYI NGES 'BYUNG GI BSAM PA
MTSAN NYID TSANG BA ZHIG MA SKYES NA, SEMS CAN GZHAN 'KHOR
BA LAS SGROL 'DOD KYI SNYING RJE CHEN PO SKYE MI SRID PAS NGES
'BYUNG 'DI MED THABS MED,

Suppose you never manage to develop a desire to get free of the cycle of life yourself—suppose you never reach a renunciation which is complete in every respect. It will be impossible then for you to develop what we call "great compassion"—the desire to liberate every other living being from the cycle. This makes renunciation a "without which, nothing."

GZUGS SKU SGRUB BYED BSOD NAMS KYI TSOGS GSOG PA GTZO BO
BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS DANG , CHOS SKU SGRUB BYED YE SHES KYI
TSOGS KYI GNAD CHE SHOS NI YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA LA THUG PAS
NA LAM GYI GNAD THAMS CAD LAM GTZO GSUM DU BSDUS NAS
NYAMS SU LEN PA 'DI 'JAM DBYANGS KYIS RJE RIN PO CHE LA DNGOS
SU STZAL BA'I GDAMS PA KHYAD PAR CAN YIN,

Now in order to achieve the Buddha's body of form,[32] a person must first gather together what we refer to as the "collection of merit." This gathering depends principally on the desire to achieve Buddhahood for the sake of every living being. To achieve the Buddha's dharma body, a person must have the "collection of wisdom." Here the most important thing is to develop correct view.

All the most vital points of the path then have been packed into the three principal paths, and made into an instruction which can be carried out by students. These words of advice, imparted directly to our precious lord by Gentle Voice himself, are therefore very special indeed.

DE YANG THOG MAR BLO CHOS SU 'GRO BA LA NGES 'BYUNG , CHOS
THEG PA CHEN PO'I LAM DU 'GRO BA LA BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS, SGRIB
PA GNYIS YONGS SU SPONG BA LA YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA MED THABS
MED PAS DE GSUM LA LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM GSUM ZHES GSUNGS,

There's no way to turn your mind to spiritual practice unless you have renunciation from the very first. And there's no way for this practice to serve as a path of the greater way unless you have the desire to become a Buddha for the sake of every living being. And there's no way to rid yourself totally of the two obstacles[33] unless you have correct view. This is why these three attitudes were spoken to be the "three principal paths."

LAM GTZO GSUM PO 'DI LA MYONG BA ZHIG THON PHYIN CHAD BYAS
TSAD CHOS SU 'GRO BA ZHIG 'ONG , 'DI GSUM GYIS MA ZIN NA CI BYAS
'KHOR BA'I RGYU LAS MA 'DAS PA YIN TE, LAM RIM CHEN MO LAS,

Once you have gained some facility in the three principal paths, everything you do becomes a spiritual practice. If your mind is not filled with these three thoughts, then everything you try leads you nowhere further than the same old circle of births. As the *Greater Steps to Buddhahood* says,

DE LTAR NA 'KHOR BA LA RNAM GRANGS DU MAR NYES DMIGS SU
BRTAGS TE BSGOMS PAS 'KHOR BA'I PHUN TSOGS LA SRED PA SUN 'BYIN
PA'I GNYEN PO YANG MA RNYED, BDAG MED PA'I DON LA SO SOR RTOG
PA'I SHES RAB KYIS TSUL BZHIN DU YANG MA DPYAD, BYANG CHUB
KYI SEMS GNYIS LA GOMS PAR BYED PA DANG BRAL BA'I DGE SBYOR
RNAMS NI

Suppose you try to perform some kind of virtuous deeds, but you have yet to find that special antidote that destroys your tendency to crave for the good things of this circling life—you have yet to succeed in that meditation where you've analyzed all the drawbacks of the circle of life using all the various reasons we've set forth above. Suppose too that you still haven't been able to investigate the meaning of "no self-nature" as you should, using the

analytical type of wisdom. And let's say further that you still lack any familiarity with the two types of desire to reach Buddhahood for every living being.[34]

ZHING GI MTHU LA BR TEN PA 'GA' RE MA GTOGS PA KUN 'BYUNG
RANG DGA' BAR 'GRO BAS 'KHOR BA'I 'KHOR LO BSKOR BA YIN NO, ,
ZHES GSUNGS PA YIN,

If you happen to do a few good deeds this way towards some particularly holy object, you might get some good results, but only because of the object's power. Otherwise everything you've done is simply the same old source of suffering—and you come back round around the round of rebirth.[35]

'DI LA DGONGS NAS BKA' GDAMS GONG MAS KYANG , BSGOM RGYU'I
LHA GZUGS RE DANG 'DREN RGYU'I SNGAGS RE TA KUN LA 'ONG STE
BSAM RGYU'I CHOS SHIG MED PAS LAN PA YIN, ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

The Seers of the Word in olden days were making the same point when they used to say, "Everybody's got some mystic being they're meditating about and everybody's got some mystic words that they're talking about and all because nobody's got any real practice they're thinking about." [36]

DE'I PHYIR RANG CAG RNAMS KYANG CHOS GSHA' MA ZHIG BYED
BSAM NA CI BYAS THAR PA DANG THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA'I RGYUR
'GRO BA ZHIG DGOS, DE 'ONG BA LA LAM GTZO GSUM LA MYONG BA
THON PA ZHIG DGOS, 'DI GSUM NI BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA'I
SNYING PO'AM SROG LTA BU YIN TE, RJE THAMS CAD MKHYEN PAS,
LAM SGRON BSHAD BYA RTZA BA'I GZHUNG DANG , 'DI GSUM LAM GYI
SROG TU BYAS NAS BSHAD PA YIN GSUNGS,

Therefore those of us who are thinking about doing some really pure practice of the spirit should try to find one that will take us on to freedom and all-knowingness. And for a practice to be this way, it should make us masters in the three principal paths. These three are like the heart, the very life within the teachings on the steps to Buddhahood. As the all-knowing Lord, Tsongkapa, once said: "I used the *Lamp on the Path* as my basic text, and made these three the very life of the path." [37]

DES NA DA LAM 'DIR YANG RJE'I GSUNG LAM GTZO RNAM GSUM GYI

RTZA TSIG GI STENG NAS 'KHRID MDOR BSDUS TZAM 'BUL BA LA,

So now we ourselves will give just a brief teaching using the *Three Principal Paths*—the words of this same Lord Tsongkapa—as our basic text.

III. An Offering of Praise

THOG MAR SA BCAD KYI DBANG DU BYAS NA, LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM
GSUM GYI 'KHRID LA GSUM, BSTAN BCOS BRTZOM PA LA 'JUG PA'I YAN
LAG DANG , BSTAN BCOS SPYI'I LUS DNGOS, BSHAD PA MTHAR PHYIN
PA'I BYA BA'O, , DANG PO LA GSUM, MCHOD PAR BRJOD PA, RTZOM PAR
DAM BCA' BA, NYAN PAR BSKUL BA'O, ,

We'll start by discussing the general outline of the work. This instruction on the three principal paths comes in three basic divisions: the preliminaries that lead into the composition of the text, the main body of the text, and the conclusion of the explanation. The first of these divisions has three sections of its own: an offering of praise, a pledge to compose the work, and then a strong encouragement for the reader to study it well.

DANG PO NI,
 ,RJE BTZUN BLA MA RNAMS LA PHYAG 'TSAL LO,
 ,ZHES PAS BSTAN,

What we call the "offering of praise" is contained in the opening line of the work:

I bow to all the high and holy lamas.

DE YANG BSTAN BCOS RTZOM PA'I THOG MAR RANG GI LHAG PA'I LHA
LA PHYAG BYA DGOS TE, SLOB DPON DAnd"I,
 ,SHIS BRJOD PHYAG BYA NGO BO NI,
 ,NGES PAR BSTAN PA'ANG DE YI SGO,
 ,ZHES DANG , RANG NYID 'DOD PA'I LHA LA PHYAG BYA'O, , ZHES
GSUNGS,

The very first thing a person should do when he composes a commentary is to bow to his lord of lords. As Master Dandin said,

The benediction, bow, and the essence
Must be written: they are the door.[38]

And we read as well that, "One should bow to the one he holds his lord."

'DI NI BSTAN BCOS RTZOM PA'I BYA BA MTHAR PHYIN PA DANG , BAR
CHAD MI 'BYUNG BA'I PHYIR YIN, 'DIR BLA MA RNAMS ZHES PA'I
RNAMS SGRAS SPYIR RGYA CHEN SPYOD BRGYUD DANG , ZAB MO LTA
BRGYUD SOGS DNGOS BRGYUD KYI BLA MA RNAMS DANG , THUN
MONG MA YIN PA NI MKHYEN SRID MA LTAR RGYAL BA RDO RJE
'CHANG , RJE BTZUN 'JAM DPAL DBYANGS, DPA' BO RDO RJE RNAMS
YIN,

The purpose of this prostration is that one be able to bring his composition to its completion, and that he do so without any interruptions or obstacles. The word "all" in the expression "all the lamas" is meant to refer in a general sense to all of one's immediate and lineage lamas—those who have passed on the teachings through traditions like those known as the "far-reaching activity" and the "profound view." [39] In a very special sense, the word has the meaning that we see it given in the prayer called "Knowledge Unlocks the World": it refers to the victor, Diamond Holder; to the glorious lord, Gentle Voice; and to the Hero of the Diamond. [40]

RJE BTZUN 'JAM PA'I DBYANGS NI RJE TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO LA
RTAG TU ZHAL GZIGS PA YIN, ZHAL GZIGS TSUL LA'ANG RMI LAM DU
GZIGS PA DANG , NYAMS LA GZIGS PA, DNGOS SU GZIGS PA GSUM YOD,
DNGOS LA'ANG DBANG SHES LA GZIGS PA DANG , YID SHES LA GZIGS
PA GNYIS LAS, 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO LA NI BLA MA
DANG SLOB MA'I TSUL DU DBANG SHES LA GZIGS NAS MDO SNGAGS
KYI CHOS THAMS CAD GSAN PA RED,

Now the lord, Gentle Voice, was appearing constantly to the great Tsongkapa. There are different ways such a being can appear to a person: you can see him in a dream, in your imagination, or directly. There are two ways you can see him directly: either with your physical senses, or with your mental sense. The way that Gentle Voice appeared to our protector, the great Tsongkapa, was straight to his physical senses; they sat like teacher and student, and Tsongkapa was able to learn from him every one of the open and secret teachings.

GZHAN 'GA' SHAS KYIS RJE BLA MAS MKHAS PA DANG BTZUN PA TZAM
GYIS BSTAN BCOS MDZAD PA RED BSAM PA YOD KYANG , RJE TZONG
KHA PA CHEN PO'I GSUNG NI BSTAN BCOS CHE CHUNG GA 'DRA ZHIG
YIN YANG RJE BTZUN 'JAM PA'I DBYANGS KYIS MA GSUNGS PA GCIG

KYANG MED, MA MTHAR BZHUGS GNAS DANG ZHABS PHYI DU TZAM
'KHRID TSUN CHAD KYANG RJE BTZUN LA ZHU GNANG GIS BKA' LTAR
MDZAD PA RED,

We do see some people who think otherwise: that our Lord Lama was able to write his various treatises merely out of some scholastic skill and moral depth. The truth though is that there is not a single example in all the writings of Lord Tsongkapa—no single treatise, great or small—that was not spoken by Gentle Voice himself. Lord Tsongkapa consulted Gentle Voice in every single thing he did, and followed the instructions he was given—even down to where he should stay, and how many attendants he should take with him when he went somewhere.

MDO SNGAGS KYI ZAB GNAD KHYAD PAR CAN SNGAR GYI MKHAS PA
KUN GYIS MA RTOGS PA THAMS CAD KYANG RJE BLA MAS GTAN LA
PHAB NAS GSUNGS, DE YANG RJE BTZUN GYI GSUNG LAS RJE BLA MA
RANG NYID KYIS 'OL TSOD DU GSUNGS PA GTAN NAS MED,

This Lord of Lamas was able to make definitive explanations of every deep and vital point in both the open and secret teachings—of things that all the sages gone before had never been able to fathom. These explanations are in no way something that Lord Tsongkapa came up with on his own; they came, rather, from the lips of Gentle Voice himself.

SPYIR BSTAN BCOS RNAMS SU MCHOD BRJOD MDZAD YUL SNYING RJE
DANG , MKHYEN GSUM SOGS MANG YANG , 'DIR BLA MA LA BSTOD
PHYAG MDZAD PA NI SPYIR LAM RIM, KHYAD PAR LAM GTZO RNAM
GSUM RGYUD LA SKYE BA BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL LA RAG LAS PAR
GO BA'I CHED DU BLA MA LA BSTOD PHYAG MDZAD PA YIN,

In general it is the custom, when one writes the offering of praise at the beginning of a Buddhist treatise, to express obeisance to compassion, the three types of knowledge,[41] or any other of a great many holy objects. Here though the prostration is made to "the lamas," for a very good reason. The reader wants in general to gain the steps of the path to Buddhahood—and more specifically, the three principal paths—within his own mind. The point of the prostration is to make him realize that this is all going to depend on how well he can follow the practice of proper behavior towards his spiritual teacher.

Notes to Reading Two

[7.] *Door to the Noble Path*: The edition of Pabongka Rinpoche's commentary translated here is listed at bibliography entry 46; the original verses by Lord Tsongkapa are found in his collected works at entry 68. Some other useful explanations of Lord Tsongkapa's *Three Principal Paths* are those by the following masters:

The Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617-1682)
at entries 16 and 17;

Tsechok Ling, Yeshe Gyeltsen (1713-1793) at entries 78 and 79;

Tendar Hlarampa (b. 1759) at entry 30;

Welmang Konchok Gyeltsen (1764-1853) at entry 7;

Ngulchu Dharmabhadra (1772-1851) at entries 37 and 38; as well as

Mokchok Trulku (modern) at entry 59.

[8.] *Holder of the Diamond*: A form of the Buddha in which he gives secret teachings.

[9.] *the saffron robe*: The robes of a human, Buddhist monk.

[10.] *secret three of every Victor*: The mystery of body, speech, and mind of every one of the countless Buddhas. Buddhas are called "Victors" because they have overcome the obstacles that prevent one from eliminating all bad thoughts and knowing all things.

[11.] *Gentle Voice*: Divine form representing all the wisdom of the Buddhas.

[12.] *Three Principal Paths*: "Path" in Buddhist philosophy refers to a stage of mental realization. The title has often been translated as "Three Principles of the Path," but the point is that renunciation, the wish for enlightenment, and correct view are each one a principal path.

[13.] *Dharma*: A word of many meanings, most often "spiritual teachings" or "existing object."

[14.] *all three realms*: Meaning all the world. Buddhism teaches that there are three realms of existence. We live in the "desire" realm, so called because our principal interests are food and sex. Higher up is the "form" realm, where beings live in a state of meditation and have beautiful forms. Even higher is the "formless" realm, where beings are free of gross suffering and have only mental bodies.

[15.] *More than a wishing jewel...* From the very brief version of Lord Tsongkapa's *Steps on the Path to Buddhahood* (f. 56a, bibliography entry 63). The entire context appears below in the discussion of renunciation.

[16.] *three "problems of the pot"*: How not to listen to a teaching—like a pot with the lid closed (not paying attention to what is going on), a pot full of grime (listening with ignoble motivations, such as the desire for a big reputation), and a pot with the bottom fallen out (not retaining what was heard—one is advised to review daily with one's fellow students). See Lord Tsongkapa's greater *Steps on the Path*, entry 61, f. 16; as well as Pabongka Rinpoche's famed *Liberation in Our Hands*, entry 47, ff. 54-5.

[17.] *six images for the instruction*: How one should listen to a teaching—

- a) Think of yourself as a patient, for your mental afflictions (desire and the rest) make you sick.
- b) Think of the dharma as medicine.
- c) Think of your teacher as a master physician.
- d) Think of following his teachings exactly, and as long as needed, as following the doctor's orders to get better.
- e) Think of the Buddhas as infallible, or of the Infallible One (your teacher) as a Buddha.
- f) Pray that this great cure, the teachings of the Buddhas, may long remain in the world.

See Lord Tsongkapa, entry 61, ff. 16-19, and Pabongka Rinpoche, entry 47, ff. 55-61.

[18.] *three lands*: That is, below the earth (where the serpent-beings and similar creatures live), upon the earth (where men are found), and in the sky above the earth (where deities make their home).

[19.] *Ngawang Drakpa*: See the Foreword for a description of this disciple's life.

[20.] *three different scopes*: The wish to escape oneself from the lower realms, the wish to escape oneself from the entire circle of life, and the wish to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of every living being.

[21.] *lives of misery*: A birth in the hells, as an insatiable spirit, or as an animal.

[22.] *Channels and Winds, etc.*: All highly advanced practices from the secret teachings of the Buddha.

[23.] *Geshe Puchungwa (1031-1106) and Chen-ngawa (1038-1103)*: Source of quotation not found. Geshe Puchungwa, full name Shunnu Gyeltsen, was one of the "three great brothers," direct disciples of Lord Drom Tonpa who helped him found and spread the Seer tradition of the early Tibetan Buddhist masters (see notes 36 and 49 below). Chen-ngawa, also known as Tsultrim Bar, was another of the three, as was the great Potowa (see note 42).

[24.] *five sciences*: Classical grammar, logic, Buddhist theory, the fine arts, and medicine.

[25.] *five types of clairvoyance*: Supernormal powers of emanation, sight, hearing, perception of the past, and knowledge of others' thoughts.

[26.] *eight great attainments*: These are to gain "the sword," which allows one to travel anywhere; "the pill," which enables you to become invisible or assume any outer form; "the eye ointment," which helps you see minute or very distant objects; "swift feet," the ability to travel at high speeds; "taking essence," an ability to live off nothing but tiny bits of sustenance; "sky walk," the ability to fly; and "underground," the power to pass through solid ground like a fish through water.

[27.] *Lord Atisha (982-1054)*: Full name Dipamkara Shri Jnyana, illustrious Indian sage who brought the teachings of the Steps of the path to Tibet. Author of *Lamp on the Path*, a prototype text of this genre (bibliography entry 57).

[28.] *the Brahmin's son Tsanakya*: In his classic work on the Steps to Buddhahood, Pabongka Rinpoche explains that Tsanakya was able to master the difficult secret practice of the Lord of Death, but fell to the lowest hell because he used his knowledge to harm other beings (f. 225b, entry 47).

[29.] *master meditator of Lo Diamond*: The Rinpoche's *Liberation in Our Hands* again explains (f. 291b, entry 47). The practitioner undertook one of the most powerful practices of the secret teachings, but due to his less than perfect motivation was able to achieve only a lower result. Lord Atisha notes here that such practitioners had even dropped to the hells.

[30.] *giving, morality, etc.*: The first five of the six Buddhist perfections. The last is the perfection of wisdom.

[31.] *Suppose you fail...* Quotation from Lord Tsongkapa's report to his teacher and disciple, the venerable Rendawa, on teachings received from Gentle Voice himself (ff. 2b-3a, entry 62).

[32.] *body of form and dharma body*: The physical form of a Buddha and his mind (along with this mind's ultimate nature) are called the "form body" and "dharma body," respectively.

[33.] *two obstacles*: See note 10.

[34.] *two types of desire to reach Buddhahood*: See note 136.

[35.] *Suppose you try...* Quotation from Lord Tsongkapa's *opus magnum* (f. 156b, entry 61).

[36.] *Everybody's got some mystic being...* Original source of quotation not found; it appears also in Pabongka Rinpoche's *Liberation in Our Hands* (f. 294a, entry 47). The Seers of the Word were an eminent group of early Buddhist masters in Tibet whose lineage descended from Lord Atisha and his principal disciple, Lord Drom Tonpa. The school's name in Tibetan, "Kadampa," is explained as meaning that they were able to see the Word of the Buddha (*ka*) as personal instruction (*dam*) that applied immediately to their own practice.

[37.] *I used the "Lamp on the Path"*: The full context of this quotation appears in Pabongka Rinpoche's *Liberation in Our Hands* (f. 37b, entry 47); it reveals much of the sources of our text and restates its comprehensive nature. Lord Tsongkapa

has just related the contents of a major section of his massive *Greater Steps on the Path to Buddhahood* to his divine mentor, Gentle Voice. And then,

Gentle Voice asked the Lord in a playful way, "Well now, is there anything in your work that isn't covered in those three principal paths I taught you?"

Lord Tsongkapa replied, "This is how I composed my work. I took the three principal paths which you, oh Holy One, taught me, and made them the very life of the path. I used the *Lamp on the Path* as my basic text, and supplemented it with many other advices of the Seers of the Word."

[38.] *Master Dandin*: Hindu poet dated to about the 7th Century A.D., author of *The Mirror of Poetics*, a renowned treatise on composition (quotation on f. 322b, entry 34). We have not been able to locate the next quotation in the text.

[39.] *traditions of "far-reaching activity" and "profound view"*: Refer, respectively, to the teachings on the wish for enlightenment and correct view (the former assuming renunciation, the third principal path). See also note 195.

[40.] *"Knowledge Unlocks the World"*: Famed verses of supplication by Lord Tsongkapa himself, named from the opening line (see f. 3a, entry 65). The three beings mentioned are different forms of the Buddha.

[41.] *three types of knowledge*: Realizations of the true nature of reality, in varying degrees.

The Key that Unlocks the Door to the Noble Path (Lam bzang sgo 'byed) written by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-91), a commentary upon the *Three Principal Paths (Lam-gtzo rnam-gsum)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), folios 5b-7b.

IV. How to Take a Lama

DE YANG CHOS BYED PA'I THOG MAR BLA MA GAL CHE STE, DGE BSHES
PO TO BAS, RNAM GROL BSGRUB PA LA BLA MA LAS GAL CHE BA MED
DE, TSE 'DI'I BYA BA BLTAS NAS BYAS PAS CHOG PA LA'ANG SLOB
MKHAN MED PAR MI 'ONG NA, NGAN SONG NAS 'ONGS MA THAG PA
'GRO MA MYONG BA'I SAR 'GRO BA LA BLA MA MED PAR GA NA 'ONG
GSUNGS,

Now a lama is extremely important at the outset of any attempts at a spiritual life. As Geshe Potowa said,

To reach liberation, there is nothing more important than a lama.
Even in simple things of this present life, with things that you can
learn just by sitting down and watching someone, you can't get
anywhere without a person to show you. So how on earth are you
going to get anywhere without a lama, when you want to go
somewhere you've never gone before, and you've only just arrived
from a journey through the lower births?[42]

DES NA DPE CHA BLTA SHES PA TZAM GYIS MI 'ONG BAS BLA MA ZHIG
NGES PAR BSTEN DGOS, BLA MA MED PAR DPE CHA BLTAS PA TZAM
GYIS GRUB PA THOB PA SNGON YANG GCIG KYANG MA BYUNG ZHING ,
PHYIS KYANG 'BYUNG BA MI SRID PA YIN,

Therefore you're absolutely going to have to go and learn from a lama; just
reading dharma books is not going to work. There has never been a single person
in history who gained his spiritual goals without a lama, just by reading books
on dharma. And it will never happen in the future either.

BLA MA DE YANG DPER NA NYIN GCIG GI 'GRO SA'I LAM STON MKHAN
KYANG LAM RGYUS LA MKHAS PA ZHIG DGOS PA LTAR THAR PA DANG
THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA'I GO 'PHANG DU 'KHRID PA'I BLA MA DE
YANG MTSAN NYID DANG LDAN PA ZHIG DGOS, DE MED NA BLA MA
BZANG NGAN JI 'DRA ZHIG YOD NA SLOB MA YANG DE DANG 'DRA BAR
S'ATZTSA BRKOS PHOR NAS BTON PA LTAR 'ONG BAS BLA MA MTSAN

LDAN GAL CHE,

Now what kind of lama should he be? It takes a guide who knows every turn of the path just to get you somewhere you can reach in a single day. For a lama who's supposed to lead you on to freedom and the state of knowing all things, you're going to need one who has all the requisite qualities. It's important to find a really qualified lama; it's not something you shouldn't care much about, because you're going to end up like him—for better or for worse. The student comes out according to the mold, like those little clay tablets with holy images pressed into them.

BLA MA'I MTSAN NYID KYANG 'DUL BA LA, YON TAN 'BYUNG GNAS
SOGS LTAR BRTAN MKHAS KYI YON TAN GNYIS DANG LDAN PA ZHIG
DANG , SNGAGS LA, SGO GSUM LEGS BSDAMS SOGS LTAR DANG , MDO
SNGAGS SPYIR BTANG LA, GANG DANG LDAN NA SOGS LTAR YON TAN
BCU DANG LDAN PA,

What are the characteristics that make a lama qualified? According to the teachings on vowed morality he should be, as they say, a "source of all good qualities" and so on.[43] This means that the lama should possess the two good qualities of being steady and wise.[44] According to the secret teachings, he should fit the description that starts with the words "all three gateways well restrained." According to general tradition—that of both the open and the secret teachings—the lama should have ten fine qualities, as mentioned in the verse that begins with "You who have all ten..."

MA MATH BSLAB PA GSUM GYIS THUGS RGYUD DUL BA, LUNG DANG
LDAN PA, RTOGS PA DANG LDAN PA ZHIG NGES PAR DGOS TE, MDO
SDE RGYAN LAS,

,BSHES GNYEN DUL BA ZHI BA NYER ZHI BA,
,YON TAN LHAG PA BRTZON BCAS LUNG GIS PHYUG
,DE NYID RAB TU RTOGS PA SMRA MKHAS LDAN,
,BRTZE BA'I BDAG NYID SKYO BA SPANGS LA BRTEN,
,ZHES GSUNGS,

At the very least, your lama must absolutely be a person who has controlled his mind by practicing the three trainings,[45] who possesses a knowledge of the scriptures, and who possesses actual realizations. As the *Jewel of the Sutras* states,

Take yourself to a spiritual guide controlled, at peace,

High peace, with exceeding qualities and effort, who's rich
In scripture, with a deep realization of suchness, a master instructor
Who's the very image of love, and beyond becoming
discouraged.[46]

BLA MA'I MTSAN NYID DE DAG NI SLOB MAS KYANG SHES PAR BYAS TE
DE DANG LDAN PA'I BLA MA BTZAL DGOS, BLA MA YON TAN CHE
CHUNG SOGS JI 'DRA ZHIG YOD KYANG SLOB MA YANG SKAL BA
BZANG ZHAN DE DANG MTHUN PA ZHIG YONG STE, BLA MA MDO
SNGAGS KYI LAM YONGS RDZOGS LA 'KHRID THUB PA ZHIG BSTEN NA
SLOB MA DE YANG LAM YONGS RDZOGS THOS PA DANG , GO BA
CHAGS PA'I SKAL LDAN ZHIG 'BYUNG , LAM YONGS RDZOGS LA GO BA
TZAM CHAGS NA'ANG YON TAN GZHAN DANG GZHAN YOD PA LAS
BSOD NAMS CHE,

The prospective disciple on his part should familiarize himself with these descriptions of a proper lama's qualifications, and then seek out a lama who possesses them. Whether the disciple himself turns out to be more or less blessed with virtues depends on the degree to which his lama possesses high personal qualities. If the disciple enjoys a relationship with a lama who is capable of guiding him through the entire range of the open and secret paths, then the disciple will come to be one blessed, in the sense of having heard about and gained some understanding of the paths in their entirety. Even just gaining this general idea of the overall paths represents greater merit than any other good qualities that the student might possess.

DE LTA BU'I BLA MA RNYED NAS TSUL BZHIN DU BSTEN DGOS, DE LA
SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG LA NYE BA SOGS BSTEN PA'I PHAN YON
BRGYAD DANG , DE LAS LDOG PA MA BSTEN PA'I NYES DMIGS BRGYAD
YOD,

Once the disciple does manage to locate a lama with the qualities described above, he must rely on him in the proper way. Here there are eight great benefits a person can gain through proper behavior towards his teacher, beginning with being "close to Buddhahood." [47] There are also eight different dangers of improper behavior towards one's lama—these are the opposites of the benefits just mentioned.

RJE TZONG KHA PA CHEN POS KYANG ,
,DE NAS 'DI PHYI' I LEGS TSOGS JI SNYED PA'I,

,RTEN 'BREL LEGS PAR 'GRIGS 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 BYAS,
,THAR 'DOD KHYED KYANG DE BZHIN BSKYANG 'TSAL LO,
,ZHES GSUNGS,

As the great Lord Tsongkapa said himself,

First then see that the very root for getting
an excellent start
Towards any of the goods things in the present
or future lives
Is effort in proper behavior in both thought
and practice towards
The spiritual guide who shows the path; so
please him with the offering

Of carrying out his every instruction,
never giving up
A single one even when it may cost you
your life.
I, the master meditator, put this
into practice;
You, who seek for freedom, must
conduct yourselves this way.[48]

SNGAR GYI JO 'BROM SOGS KYANG RTOGS PA DANG MDZAD 'PHRIN
'GRAN ZLA MED PA BYUNG BA DE RANG RANG GI BLA MA RNAMS LA
BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL TSUL BZHIN MDZAD PA LAS BYUNG BA RED,
DER MA ZAD SNGAR GYI RJE MID LA SOGS KYANG DE LTAR YIN,

Those of past days, people like Lord Atisha and the great Drom Tonpa,[49]
gained matchless levels of realization and were able to perform mighty deeds
beyond equal—all of this came because each of them succeeded in maintaining
the proper relationship with his own spiritual guide. And it doesn't end there—
we can point to Lord Milarepa[50] and others of olden days, and say exactly the

same thing.

BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL 'DI NAS RTEN 'BREL LEGS NYES KYI KHE
NYEN CHE, N'A RO PA'I DRUNG NAS MAR PA YANG RTEN 'BREL
'PHYUGS, MID LAS MAR PAR ZANGS STONG PA DRI MED CIG PHUL BAS
RTEN 'BREL LEGS NYES DE BZHIN DU MA 'CHOL BAR BYUNG ,

Proper behavior with one's spiritual guide has tremendous potential—both good and bad—in determining whether a person gets off to an auspicious start in his practice. Marpa slipped before Naropa and ruined his chances for an auspicious beginning.[51] Milarepa offered Marpa a copper pot—empty, but absolutely clean. His start with his practice then was one both good and bad—in exact correspondence to the good and bad of the gift.

KHRI CHEN BSTAN PA RAB RGYAS KYIS YONGS 'DZIN NGAG DBANG
CHOS 'BYOR LA SNYUN G-YOG RLABS CHEN MDZAD PAS DBU MA'I LTA
BA RTOGS, SA PAⁿ GYIS RJE BTZUN GRAGS RGYAN GYI SNYUN G-YOG
TSUL BZHIN BSGRUBS PAS BLA MA 'JAM PA'I DBYANGS SU MTHONG ,
RIG GNAS LGA THOGS MED MKHYEN, RGYA BOD HOR SOGS KYI CHE
RGU DU MAS GTZUG TU BKUR BA SOGS BYUNG BA YIN,

The great throneholder Tenpa Rabgye nursed the master tutor Ngawang Chujor most effectively during the latter's illness; as a result, he was able to gain a realization of the "middle view." [52] The Sakya Pandita as well performed perfect service as the nurse of Venerable Drak-gyen. Everything that came to him later was because of this service: he was able to see his lama as the deity Gentle Voice; he gained a totally unimpeded knowledge of the five great sciences; a mass of human kind in all the lands of China, Tibet, Mongolia, and elsewhere raised him in honor to the very tip of their heads; and the list goes on and on.[53]

BSTEN TSUL LOG PA'I NYES DMIGS KYANG , DGRA NAG GI DKA' 'GREL
DU DRANGS PA LAS,
 ,TSIGS BCAD GCIG TZAM MNYAN PA LA,
 ,GANG GIS BLA MAR MI 'DZIN PA,
 ,KHYI YI SKYE GNAS BRGYAR SKYES NAS,
 ,SME SHA CAN DU SKYE BAR 'GYUR,
 ,ZHES DANG ,

We should speak here too of the dangers in improper behavior towards one's lama. A reference in *Difficult Points to the Black Enemy* puts it this way:

A person who doesn't treat as a lama
Someone who's taught him so much as a line
Will take a hundred births as a dog
And then be born in the lowest of castes.⁵⁴

DUS 'KHOR RTZA RGYUD LAS,
,BLA MA LA KHROS SKAD CIG GRANGS,
,BSKAL PAR BSAGS PA'I DGE BCOM NAS,
,DE SNYED BSKAL PAR DMYAL SOGS KYI,
,SDUG BSNGAL TSOR BA DRAG PO MYONG ,

The root text of the secret teaching on the Wheel of Time states as well:

Seconds of anger toward your lama
Destroy equal eons of virtue collected,
Then bring equal eons in which you endure
The terrible pain of hells and the rest.[55]

,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR SKYES BUS SE GOL GCIG GTOG PA'I YUN LA BYA
RDZOGS KYI SKAD CIG MA DRUG CU RE LNGA YOD PAS, BYA RDZOGS
KYI SKAD CIG MA DRUG CU RTZA LNGA'I RING BLA MA LA KHRO SEMS
SKYES NA BSKAL PA DRUG CU RTZA LNGA'I YUN LA DMYAL BAR GNAS
DGOS, 'DI THEG PA 'OG MA'I LUGS LTAR YIN, THEG CHEN GYI LUGS LA
DE LAS KYANG YUN RING BA YOD,

Now the length of time in the snap of a finger is itself made up of no less than sixty-five of what we call "instants of minimum action." If an emotion of anger towards your lama comes up in your mind for this period, for sixty-five of these split-seconds, then you will have to stay in hell for a period equal to sixty-five *eons*. This by the way is how the tradition of the lesser way describes it; according to the teachings of the greater way, the period is even longer.[56]

DER MA ZAD BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL LOG NA BLA MA LNGA BCU PA
LAS GSUNGS PA LTAR TSE 'DIR YANG NAD GDON SOGS KYIS GTZES PA
DANG , 'CHI KHAR GNAD GCOD 'JIGS SKRAG TSAD MED PAS MNAR BA
DANG , DUS MIN 'CHI RKYEN BCU GSUM GANG RUNG GIS 'CHI BA SOGS
DANG ,

And there are even more dangers; a person who behaves improperly towards his

lama will, as the *Fifty Verses on Lamas* describes, suffer even more in this present life: spirits, various sicknesses, and other such problems will harass him constantly. In the hour of death, he is tormented by excruciating pain at the vital points and overwhelmed by terror. Moreover, he dies through one of the thirteen causes of a premature death—and so on.[57]

GZHAN YANG , SLOB DPON SANGS RGYAS YE SHES KYI SPYAN LHUNG
BA DANG , DGE BSHES SNE'U ZUR PA'I SLOB MA LA 'CHI RKYEN BYUNG
BSOGS LTAR, MDOR NA BLA MA LA BRNYAS SMOD BYAS PA'I RNAME
SMIN NI SANGS RGYAS KYIS KYANG GSUNG BAR MI NUS PA'I TSUL
TZAM GYIS CHE PHYI MAR DMYAL BA MNAR MED DU SKYE BAR
GSUNGS,

There are even further examples of the dangers; we can recall the master Sangye Yeshe,[58] whose eyes dropped out of their sockets, or the disciple of Geshe Neusurpa who met with an untimely death, among others.[59] In short, it is stated that the result which ripens onto a person in his future lives once he has spoken ill of his lama is so horrible that even a Buddha would be incapable of describing it fully. The person takes his rebirth in the lowest of all hells, known as "Torment Without," where the pain goes on without stopping.

BLA MA BSTEN TSUL YANG BKA' CHOS GNANG MKHAN DANG , KA KHA
SLOB MKHAN GNYIS LA KHYAD MED DGOS, BLA MA BSTEN PA'I RING
RANG DON DU KHA TON BYAS PA LTA BU MA GTOGS PA SRI ZHU BKUR
STI SOGS ZHABS TOG SGRUB TSAD BLA MA'I RNAL 'BYOR YIN PAS BLA
MA'I RNAL 'BYOR GYI DMIGS PA GZHAN NAS TSOL MI DGOS,

When we speak of "proper behavior towards your lama," it's necessary for the student to realize that we draw no distinction between the person who delivers him formal dharma teachings and the person who teaches him the alphabet and so on. Whatever a disciple undertakes in the service of his lama during the length of their relationship—whether it be attending to him, paying him respects, or so on, everything except those minor things like the personal daily recitations that the student does for himself—all of it counts as what we call "lama practice." As such it is unnecessary for a disciple in the service of his lama to go out and seek one of the other, formal meditative techniques that are known as "lama practice."

BLA MA DE BSTEN TSUL LEGS NYES JI LTAR BYAS PA BZHIN PHAN YON
BRGYAD DANG NYES DMIGS RNAMS SO SOR 'BYUNG , BSTEN PA'I TSE
YANG BLA MA SANGS RGYAS YIN PAR RDO RJE 'CHANG GIS BZHED PA

SOGS SA BCAD RNAMS BKRAM NAS DPYAD SGOM BYAS TE LUNG RIGS
KYIS BSGRUB DGOS,

Each of the eight benefits and eight dangers comes up in exact accordance to how well or poorly one behaves with his lama. During the relationship the disciple should use what we call "analytical meditation." To do so, he first has to lay out in his mind each separate point in the teaching on how to behave towards a lama. For example, he could start with the fact that the Holder of the Diamond declared a person's lama to be the Buddha himself.[60] Then the disciple should use various other cases of scriptural authority, together with logical reasoning, to satisfy himself of the truth of each point.

DPYAD SGOM 'DI MED THABS MED KYANG BOD 'DIR DPYAD SGOM
SGOM DU MKHYEN PA RJE TZONG KHA PA TZAM YIN, TSIG GI STENG
NAS YID BSHAR BYED PA BSHAR SGOM DANG , SA BCAD RNAMS 'DI
DANG 'DI'O SNYAM NAS 'DREN PA LTA BU NI GRANGS 'DREN BYAS PA
YIN, DPYAD SGOM NI BSGRUB BYA RE ZHE PHUGS SU RTZA BAR BZHAG
STE DE LA LUNG RIGS MANG POS DPYAD PA BYAS PA DE DPYAD SGOM
YIN,

This type of analytical meditation is something that you absolutely can't do without. Despite this fact, here in Tibet the only person to recognize analytical meditation as a form of meditation was Lord Tsongkapa. There is a kind of meditation known as "running" meditation, where you set your mind to run along the concepts related to some words you are reciting. Then there is "reviewing," where you try to recall each point in a particular teaching and think to yourself simply "This one goes like this, and that one goes like that." Analytical meditation is something different; here, you approach each point as something you have to prove or disprove—you set it at center stage in your mind and analyze it using a great number of statements from accepted authorities, and various lines of reasoning.

DE YANG DPER NA RANG CAG GIS CHAGS YUL SOGS YANG YANG YID
LA BYED PA DE DPYAD SGOM DANG , DE LA BR TEN NAS CHAGS SOGS
NYON MONGS PA SHUGS CAN SKYES PA DE MYONG BA THON PA RED,
DE KHA PHAR BSLOG NAS BLA MA SANGS RGYAS YIN PAR RDO RJE
'CHANG GIS BZHED PA SOGS LA RIM GYIS DPYAD SGOM BYAS NA
RTOGS PA'I NYAMS MYONG MYUR DU SKYES PA 'ONG ,

As a matter of fact, it's "analytical meditation" for example when people like us

direct our thoughts over and over to some object that we desire, or something similar. And because of this meditation our desire—or whatever other unhealthy emotion it might be—gets stronger and stronger until we can say we have gained some fluency in it. The idea here is to turn the process around: to perform analytical meditations, one by one, on points such as the fact that the Holder of the Diamond declared that one's lama is the Buddha himself. This way we quickly come to a different type of fluency—in the realization of truth.

LAM GTZO'I SKABS 'DIR BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL TSIG 'DIS BSTAN PA
YIN, RJE, BTZUN, BLA MA ZHES PA GSUM SKYES BU CHUNG , 'BRING ,
CHEN PO GSUM LA SBYAR TSUL YANG YOD,

The entire concept of how one should take himself to a lama in the proper way is indicated here in the work on the principal paths with these simple words of praise: "I bow to all the high and holy lamas." There is, incidentally, a way you can interpret the words "high," "holy," and "lamas" in the line as referring to persons of the lesser, middle, and greater scopes of practice.

Notes to Reading Three

[42.] *To reach liberation...* Geshe Potowa (1031-1105), full name Rinchen Sel, was a master of the Seer tradition and one of the three great disciples of Lord Drom Tonpa (see notes 23 and 49). His *Metaphors* (with commentary at entry 19) are an important predecessor to later works on the Steps. The quotation here is found on p. 14 of Hladri Gangpa's commentary to the *Blue Book* (see entry 89), a compilation of the great Potowa's teachings written out by his student Geshe Dolpa (see note 174).

[43.] *source of good qualities*: Opening words of a supplication from a famed devotional text, the *Offering to Lamas*, by the venerated Lobsang Chukyi Gyeltsen, first of the illustrious Panchen Lamas of Tibet (p. 54, entry 51). The three verses mentioned here read as follows:

Source of all good qualities, great sea
of morality;

Brimming with a mass of jewels, teachings
you have learned;

My lord, second Lord of the Able, wearing
a saffron robe;

I seek your blessing, master who keeps
the knowledge of the vows.

You who have all ten qualities that one
must possess to be

Worthy to teach the path of all those
who have gone to bliss;

Lord of the dharma, regent standing in
for every Victor;

I seek your blessing, spiritual guide
for the greater way.

All three gateways well restrained, wise,

and patient, and straight;

Free of guile, deception; learned in
the secrets and their texts;

Master at writing and edifying two tens
of secret lore;

I seek your blessing, first among all of
those who hold the diamond.

"Lord of the Able" refers to the present Buddha; the "ten qualities" are listed in the verse directly following.

[44.] *steady and wise*: A Buddhist monk is "steady" when he has kept his vows pure for at least ten years following his ordination. "Wise" refers to knowledge of a whole list of subjects in the study of ethics, such as understanding what is a moral downfall and what is not, or which misdeeds are more serious than others.

[45.] *the three trainings*: These are exceptional morality, exceptional concentration, and exceptional wisdom.

[46.] *Jewel of the Sutras*: A "sutra" is an open teaching of the Buddha. The verse is from a famed commentary taught to Master Asanga (c. 350 A.D.) by Loving One, the Future Buddha (ff. 20a- 20b, entry 43).

[47.] *eight great benefits*: The eight are described as coming close to Buddhahood, pleasing the Buddhas, overcoming evil influences, avoiding improper activities and thoughts, reaching high realizations, always meeting teachers, never falling to the lower realms, and attaining temporary and ultimate goals with ease (Lord Tsongkapa, entry 61, ff. 33-6; Pabongka Rinpoche, entry 47, ff. 124-9).

[48.] *First then see...* Again, quoted from the briefer version of his *Steps on the Path* (f. 56a, entry 63).

[49.] *the great Drom Tonpa (1005-1064)*: Full name Gyalway Jungne, most famed disciple of Lord Atisha, himself the great progenitor of the teaching on the Steps in Tibet. Founded the renowned Radreng Monastery in central Tibet. The *Blue Annals* relate how he gained miraculous powers after clearing Lord Atisha's excrement off the floor of the Master's cell (p. 259, entry 94). Lord Atisha himself,

it is said, took a perilous journey by sea for over a year to meet one of his principal teachers in what is now Indonesia. After arriving, he examined his teacher for some time before becoming his student, and then served him for twelve years.

[50.] *Lord Milarepa (1040-1123)*: The famed cave-meditator of Tibet, author of some of the greatest spiritual poetry in any language (some examples appear below in the section on renunciation). The hardships he undertook as a test from his teacher Marpa are famous; see for example the *Blue Annals*, entry 94, pp. 430-1.

[51.] *Marpa (1012-1097) and Naropa (1016-1100)*: Marpa, also known as the "Great Translator," was a teacher of Lord Milarepa and an early Tibetan Buddhist who helped bring the secret teachings from India. His own teacher was Naropa, a renowned Indian master who also instructed Lord Atisha. As Pabongka Rinpoche again relates in his *Liberation in Our Hands* (f. 133a, entry 47), Marpa was once faced with the choice of prostrating first to his teacher or to a fantastic divine being who had made his appearance in the room; he made the mistake of selecting the latter. Milarepa's offering to Marpa himself is mentioned on the same folio.

[52.] *throneholder Tenpa Rabgye and the master tutor Ngawang Chujor*: Lobsang Yeshe Tenpa Rabgye, also known as Achi Tuno Monhan, was a distinguished scholar of the Gelukpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism; his title indicates that he held the throne passed down from Lord Tsongkapa himself. His collected works—chiefly on the secret teachings—are still extant in two volumes (entry 32). From the colophons of these works we learn that he did most of his writing at Ganden Monastery near Lhasa, and seems to have been born about 1758. Here he also states that he learned about the two forms of the wish for enlightenment chiefly from the great Ngawang Chujor.

[53.] *Sakya Pandita (1182-1251)*: Full name Kunga Gyeltsen, one of the greatest spiritual teachers of all Central Asia, renowned translator and commentator of the Buddhist canon, brought the tradition from Tibet to the Mongolians. Venerable Drak-gyen (full name Drakpa Gyeltsen, 1147-1216) was his uncle and mentor; see also note 86 below.

[54.] *A person who doesn't treat as a lama...* The quotation is found on f. 161b (entry 82) of a commentary on the secret teaching of the Lord of Death composed by Ratnakara Shanti, also known as Shantipa. He was a famed master of the great

Vikramashila Monastery in northeast India during the 10th Century, and taught Lord Atisha before his journey to Tibet.

[55.] *Wheel of Time*: Original source for the quotation not found; it appears in Pabongka Rinpoche's great work on the Steps of the path (f. 130b, entry 47), attributed only to the "Wheel of Time" with no mention of "root text." The root text for the secret teaching on the Wheel of Time was huge, twelve thousand verses long, and only abridgements have been included in the Tibetan canon. See entry 24 for the principal version.

[56.] *the greater way*: The Buddha gave various levels of teachings for disciples of different capacities; these are known as the "greater" and "lesser" ways.

[57.] *Fifty Verses on Lamas*: Traditional manual on how to behave towards one's spiritual guide, by the great Buddhist poet Ashvaghosha (c. 100 A.D.). The thirteen causes of a premature death are listed on f. 10a (entry 29) and explained by Lord Tsongkapa in his commentary (pp. 334-6, entry 66) as follows: an unbearable pain in the skull, injury by various powerful animals, different illnesses, demonic forces, plague, poison, authorities of the land, fire, snakes, water, spirits, thieves, and fierce demigods. After dying in one of these ways, the person descends directly to the hells.

[58.] *the master Sangye Yeshe*: In his masterpiece on the Steps to Buddhahood (f. 132a, entry 47), Pabongka Rinpoche relates the story of how the Indian master Sangye Yeshe (not to be confused with the later Tibetan savant of the same name) was delivering a teaching when he spotted his tutor passing by. This was the great Paktsangwa, whose name means "Swineherd," for he was posing as a common pig farmer. Sangye Yeshe pretended not to notice his lama, so he would not have to pay the pig herder obeisance before his assembled students. He later swore to his teacher that he had not seen him, and as a result his eyes fell from their sockets. The account is also mentioned in passing by Sonam Hlay Wangpo in his book of illustrations for the *Heap of Jewel Metaphors* (p. 172, entry 88).

[59.] *disciple of Geshe Neusurpa*: Pabongka Rinpoche, on the same folio as the preceding note, somewhat elucidates by saying that the disciple had failed in his pledges to his teacher and so showed great terror at the moment of his death; the disciple's name is not mentioned. Geshe Neusurpa, full name Yeshe Bar (1042-1118), was one of the early Seer masters of Tibetan Buddhism; he studied under Potowa and other great teachers, and counted among his many disciples the illustrious Langri Tangpa Dorje Senge, author of the popular *Mental Training in*

Eight Verses.

[60.] *the Buddha himself*: A number of such declarations by the Buddha himself that one's lama is the Buddha himself are quoted by Lord Tsongkapa himself in his greater work on the Steps (see f. 29ff., entry 61).

The Key that Unlocks the Door to the Noble Path (Lam bzang sgo 'byed) written by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-91), a commentary upon the *Three Principal Paths (Lam-gtzo rnam-gsum)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), folios 7b-10b

V. A Pledge to Compose the Work

GNYIS PA RTZOM PAR DAM BCA' BA NI,
 ,RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB KUN GYI SNYING PO'I DON,
 ,RGYAL SRAS DAM PA RNAMS KYIS BSNGAGS PA'I LAM,
 ,SKAL LDAN THAR 'DOD RNAMS KYI 'JUG NGOGS DE,
 ,JI LTAR NUS BZHIN BDAG GIS BSHAD PAR BYA,
 ,ZHES PAS BSTAN TE,

Here we have reached the second of the preliminaries that lead into the composition of the text. This is the pledge to compose the text, and is contained in the very first verse:

(1)

**As far as I am able I'll explain
The essence of all high teachings of the Victors,
The path that all their holy sons commend,
The entry point for the fortunate seeking freedom.**

RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB KUN GYI SNYING PO'I DON GYI GTZO BO
NYAMS SU LEN BYA DE LAM GTZO RNAM GSUM MAM LAM GYI RIM PA
'DI YIN, RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB THAMS CAD LAM GYI RIM PA GCIG TU
DRIL TE GANG ZAG GCIG GIS NYAMS SU LEN BYAR YOD PA NI BYANG
CHUB LAM RIM 'DI KHO NA LAS, GZHAN SA DGE RNYING GSUM SOGS
KYI MDO SNGAGS ZUR PA GANG LA'ANG MED DE, GUNG THANG 'JAM
PA'I DBYANGS KYIS, DRANG NGES GSUNG RAB MA LUS 'GAL MED DU, ,
ZHES SOGS DANG , RJE THAMS CAD MKHYEN PAS BLA MA DBU MA PAR
PHUL BA'I CHAB SHOG LAS KYANG ,

The principal thing that a person should put to practice—the *essence of all the high teachings of the Victors*—is the three principal paths, or what we call the "Steps of the Path." This teaching on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood is the only one where all the high teachings of the Victors have been combined into a single series of Steps that any given person can put into practice himself. Such a combination is found in no other separate instruction, open or secret, in any of

the traditions, whether we're talking about the three of the Sakya, Geluk, and Nyingma, or any other lineage.[61] We see this in lines such as the one written by Gungtang Jampeyang: "Every high teaching, literal or not, and consistent..."[62] The sentiment too is expressed in the epistle that the omniscient Tsongkapa offered to Lama Umapa:

SEMS DPA' CHEN PO DPAL MAR ME MDZAD YE SHES KYI GDAMS PA
BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA'I MTSAN NYID DANG SNGAGS KYI THEG
PA'I LAM GYI RIM PA PHYIN CI MA LOG PAR GTAN LA PHAB PA NYID YA
MTSAN PAR MTHONG NAS SLOB MA BKRI BA'I RIM PA RNAMS DE KHO
NA'I STENG NAS BYED KYIN YOD, GDAMS NGAG DE YANG GSUNG RAB
DGONGS 'GREL GYI BSTAN BCOS MAN NGAG MTHA' DAG LAM GYI RIM
PA GCIG TU DRIL NAS STON PAR SNANG BAS 'CHAD SHES PA DANG ,
NYAN SHES PA GNYIS KYIS BSHAD CING NYAMS SU BLANGS NA MAN
NGAG CHUNG CHUNG DU MA ZAD GSUNG RAB MTHA' DAG GI GUNG
'GRIG NAS 'ONG BAR SNANG BAS 'KHRID KYI RNAM GRANGS MANG PO
STON PA MA BYAS, ZHES GSUNGS PA RED,

I have come to the realization that only the unerring exposition of the Steps to the paths in both the logical and the secret traditions contained in the work on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood imparted by that great being, the glorious Dipamkara Jnyana, is worthy of such wonder; as such, the steps along which I am presently leading my own disciples I have taken only from it. This teaching of Lord Atisha's appears to me to give the entire contents of the formal commentaries and private instructions on both the words of the Buddha and later explanations of them, by combining everything into a single series of Steps along a path. I feel thus that if people learn to teach it and to study it, and are thereby able to impart and put it into practice, they will (despite the relative brevity of the work) have gone through the entire teachings of the Buddha in their proper order. For this reason I have not found it necessary to use a great number of different texts in my teaching work here.[63]

DE'I PHYIR LAM RIM 'DI 'CHAD NYAN TSAR GCIG BYAS PAS KYANG
'DZAM GLING NA YOD PA'I GSUNG RAB PO TI YONGS RDZOGS KYI
SNYING PO BTON NAS 'CHAD NYAN BYAS PA YIN,

Thus we can say that, within just a single teaching session devoted to this work

on the Steps to the path to Buddhahood, the teacher has taught and the disciples have heard the essence drawn from every single volume of Buddhist teaching that exists on this entire planet.

DE YANG RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB THAMS CAD SDE SNOD GSUM DU 'DU,
DE LAM RIM GYI SKYES BU GSUM GYI LAM DU 'DU, DE LAM RIM MDOR
BSDUS RE'I NANG DU'ANG CHA TSANG 'DU BAS NA 'JAM MGON TZONG
KHA PAS KYANG , GSUNG RAB KUN GYI SNYING PO BSDU BSDU BA, ,
ZHES SOGS DANG , BSHES GNYEN 'BROM STON PAS,

Now all the teachings of the victorious Buddhas are included into three collections,[64] and all these are included in the teachings on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood for persons of three different scopes. These teachings themselves are included, in their entirety, within even any one of the very briefest works on the Steps of the path. As the gentle protector, Tsongkapa, has described it himself, "...an abbreviated abbreviation of the pith of all the Buddhas' words." [65] The great guide Drom Tonpa said as well,

,NGO MTSAR BKA' NI SDE SNOD GSUM PO STE,
,GDAMS PA SKYES BU GSUM GYIS MDZES PA YI,
,BKA' GDAMS RIN CHEN GSER GYI PHRENG PA NI,
, 'GRO BA GANG GIS BGRANGS KYANG DON YOD YIN,
,ZHES GSUNGS,

His wondrous word is all three the collections,
Advice adorned by teachings of three scopes,
A gold and jewel rosary of the Seers,
Meaningful to all who read its beads.[66]

DES NA LAM RIM 'DI NI GSUNG RAB GZHAN DANG GZHAN LAS KHYAD
CHOS GSUM DANG CHE BA BZHI'I SGO NAS KHYAD PAR DU 'PHAGS PA
YIN PAS KHYAD CHOS 'DI LTA BU NI DPAL GSANG BA 'DUS PA DANG
BSTAN BCOS MNGON RTOGS RGYAN SOGS LA'ANG MED,

Thus it is that this teaching on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood is far superior to any other teaching of the Buddha that you might choose, for it possesses what we call the "three distinguishing features" and the "four greatnesses." [67] The special qualities mentioned above are found not even in such holy works as the glorious *Secret Collection*, [68] or the classical commentary known as the *Jewel of Realizations*. [69]

'DI LA GO BA LEGS PO ZHIG CHAGS NA TZTSA KHANG NANG GI YI GE
SHOG GYAR GCIG TSUN KYANG NYAMS SU LEN BYAR GO NUS PAS
PHAR GSUNG RAB SGO BRGYA 'BYED PA'I 'PHRUL GYI LDE MIG LTA BU
DANG , TSUR GSUNG RAB THAMS CAD 'DIR 'DUS PA YIN,

A person who develops a good understanding of these Steps to the path reaches a point where he can go to any one of those *tsatsa* sheds around town where we dispose of old scriptures and images, pick up any scrap of writing that he finds there, and know just where it fits into his lifetime practice. When you go from here to there, meaning from this single teaching on the Steps out to the mass of the Buddhas' other teachings, the Steps are like a magic key that opens a hundred different doors. Going from there to here, the total contents of that mass of teachings has been packed into these Steps.

BSTAN PA YONGS RDZOGS LA GO BA CHAGS PA'ANG DE LTA BU LA BYA
BA YIN PAS THUB BSTAN YONGS RDZOGS KYI BDAG PO ZHES PA YANG
GSAR RNYING BAN BON GYI GRUB MTHA' YONGS RDZOGS BSRES NAS
NYAMS SU LEN PA ZHIG LA MI BYA, DE YIN TE, THU'U BKVAN DHARMA
BADZR PA'I ZHAL NAS KYANG , GSAR RNYING THAMS CAD GCIG TU
BSRES PAS GNYIS KA'I GRAL DU MI CHUD PA DANG , ZHES GSUNGS PAS
K YANG SHES PA YIN,

Having the ability we've just described is, by the way, what we mean when we say someone has "gained an understanding of the teachings in their entirety." Therefore too the expression "master of all the Buddhas' teachings" is not at all meant to refer to somebody who has put together some neither-here-and-neither-there concoction of all the earlier and later systems, and who is trying to practice that. This point we get as well from something that Tuken Dharma Vajra spoke: "Try to mix up all the systems, the earlier and the later, and you end up outside of both." [70]

LAM GYI RIM PA 'DIR GSUNG RAB THAMS CAD 'DUS LUGS KYANG SDE
SNOD GSUM GYI BRJOD BYA BSDUS NAS BSTAN PAS GSUNG RAB THAMS
CAD KYI GNAD 'DUS PA YIN,

When we say here that the entire teachings of the Buddha are packed into the Steps of the path, what we mean is that every vital point of the teachings has been expressed through an abbreviated presentation of the topics contained in the three collections of scripture.

LEM RIM 'DI LHA BLA MA BYANG CHUB 'OD KYIS JO BO LA BSTAN PA
SPYI LA PHAN PA'I CHOS SHIG GNANG BAR GSOL BA BTAB PA NA JO
BOS BYANG CHUB LAM SGRON GSUNGS TE DE NAS BZUNG LAM GYI
RIM PA'I MTSAN GYI THA SNYAD GNANG STE DAR RGYAS SU BYUNG BA
LAS, JO BO DANG RJE TZONG KHA PAS GSAR BZO MDZAD PA GTAN MIN
PAR DUS GSUM GYI SANGS RGYAS THAMS CAD GSHEGS PA'I GZHUNG
LAM YIN TE, SHER PHYIN MDO SDUD PA LAS,

Now about the expression "Steps of the Path"; the royal lama Jangchub Uw once made a petition to Lord Atisha, asking for an instruction that would be of special benefit to keep the teachings of the Buddha in the world.[71] Lord Atisha then spoke the *Lamp on the Path to Buddhahood*, which from that time onwards he referred to as the "Steps of the Path"—and thus the expression began to spread. This teaching though is by no means something that Lord Atisha and the great Tsongkapa invented themselves; rather, it is that grand highway along which each and every Buddha has travelled. As the shorter Sutra on the *Perfection of Wisdom* says it,

,RGYAL BA 'DAS DANG MA BYON DA LTAR GANG BZHUGS PA,
,KUN LAM PHA ROL PHYIN PA 'DI YIN GZHAN MA YIN,
,ZHES GSUNGS, LAM RIM ZHES PA'I MTSAN GYI KHUNGS KYANG 'DI YIN,

It is this perfection, nothing else, which is
the path that's shared
By all the Victors, stay they in the past,
the present, or the future.[72]

This, by the way, is the ultimate origin of the expression "Steps of the Path."

DE LTAR NA LAM RIM 'DI BOD SPYI' CHOS YIN YANG , KHA CIG DGE
LDAN PA'I SGER CHOS SU 'DOD DE 'DI LA MI MOS PA NI RANG RANG
BSOD NAMS KYI BSAGS RGYAB CHUNG BAS LAN PA RED,

Therefore the teaching on the Steps of the path is one for all Tibet; still though, some people feel no desire to study it, for they hold it to be a private instruction of the Geluk tradition. They are not at fault; it is only because they have insufficient merit from their past deeds that they think this way.

DER MA ZAD SANGS RGYAS THAMS CAD GSHEGS SA'I SHUL LAM DE LA

ZHUGS NA SANGS RGYAS THAMS CAD KYIS BRNYES PA'I GO 'PHANG
DER SLEBS TE 'ONG , GZHAN DU NA SANGS RGYAS SOGS SNGAR DAM
PA RNAMS KYIS MA THOB PA'I SA LAM KHYAD MTSAR ZHIG TU SLEBS
PA LAS 'OS MED, RANG CAG LA DE LTA BU'I GOL SAR SHOR DOGS MED
PAR LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI LTA BU NYAMS SU LEN BYAR YOD PA NI JO BO
DANG RJE TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO'I BKA' DRIN YIN,

And that's not all; it is in fact by stepping on to this path well-worn by all the
Buddhas that one eventually arrives at the very state all Buddhas have found.
Otherwise it doesn't make sense that you'd get anywhere except to some weird
path or level that no Buddha or any other high being of the past has ever
reached. You and I have no need to fear that we might ever make such a blunder,
for we have the Steps of the path for our practice. All this we owe to the great
kindness of Lord Atisha and Lord Tsongkapa.

CHOS SHIG BYED BSAM PA TSOS LAM MA NOR BA 'DI LTA BU LA SLOB
DGOS PA LAS KHYI' KHA ZAS BZHIN DU GANG BYUNG BYUNG BYA BA
MI RIGS TE, 'JAM MGON SA PAndI TAS,

People who have hopes of doing some kind of spiritual practice should study an
unerring path such as this one. It's not right just to practice anything you can get
ahold of, like some stray dog that gobbles down anything he can find. As the
gentle protector, the Sakya Pandita, has said:

,RTA DANG NOR BU LA SOGS PA'I,
,CUNG ZAD TZAM GYI NYO TSONG LA,
,KUN LA 'DRI ZHING BRTAG NAS DPYOD,
,TSE 'DI'I BYA BA CUNG ZAD LA'ANG ,
,DE 'DRA'I 'BAD PA BYED PAR MTHONG ,
,SKYE BA GTAN GYI 'DUN MA NI,
,DAM PA'I CHOS LA RAG LAS KYANG ,
,CHOS NI KHYI YI ZAS BZHIN DU,
,BZANG NGAN GANG DU'ANG MI DPYOD PAR,
,GANG 'PHRAD DE LA GUS PAR 'DZIN,
,ZHES GSUNGS,

Even in some insignificant business
Over a horse, a gem, or the like,
You check: ask everyone, consider it well.
We see people taking pains like this over

Even the smallest matters of this life.
Gaining the ultimate goal of all our
Countless lives depends on dharma,
Yet we prize any dharma we might come across,
Not checking if it's good or bad,
And act like dogs with a scrap of food.[73]

DE YANG DPER NA TSE 'DI'I BYA BA NYO TSONG LTA BU CUNG ZAD RE
LA'ANG THABS SNA TSOGS KYIS GZHAN LA'ANG DRIS, RANG GIS
KYANG BRTAG DPYAD NAN TAN BYED KYANG , DE JI TZAM 'PHYUG
NA'ANG TSE PHYI MAR PHAN GNOD GANG YANG MI 'BYUNG , CHOS
NOR BA ZHIG DANG 'PHRAD NA SKYE BA GTAN GYI 'DUN MA 'PHYUG
'GRO ,

That's just how it is—even in every little matter of this present life, like when you're buying or selling something, you take a lot of care: you do everything you can think of, you run around and ask other people, you spend a lot of time thinking over what to do yourself. But no matter how big a mistake you make with something like this, it's not going to help or hurt you in your future life at all. If you meet up with a spiritual teaching that's wrong though, you make a mistake that affects the ultimate goal of all your lives.

SPYIR DBEN PA'I GNAS SU SGRUB PA BYED LO BYAS KYANG GDAMS
NGAG TSANG LA MA NOR BA LA NYAMS LEN RDO RUS THUG PA ZHIG
BYED PA MED NA, PHAL CHER NGAL BA DON MED NYID LAS MA 'DAS
PA YIN TE, RJE MID LAS KYANG ,

Generally speaking a lot of us go off to some deserted place with the notion that we're going to do some deep practice there. But unless you go with some instruction in hand that is really complete and totally correct, and unless you work to dig down to its core, most of what you do won't be much more than simple wasted effort. As Lord Milarepa once said,

,DON SNYAN BRGYUD KYI GDAMS PA MI BSGOMS NA,
,GNAS RI KHROD BZUNG YANG RANG SDUG YIN,
,ZHES GSUNGS,

The point: if you don't meditate on advices
passed down ear to ear;

The place: you can sit in a mountain cave,

but only to torture yourself.[74]

SNGAR GYI LO TS'A BA CHEN PO DAG GIS KYANG DKA' SPYAD DU MAS
THAG RING RGYA GAR GYI YUL NAS CHOS TSAD LDAN BOD 'DIR GDAN
DRANGS PA YANG BOD KYI CHOS LOG DE TSOS GO MA CHOD PA RED,
DES NA CHU 'GO'I PHUGS GANGS LA THUG DGOS PA BZHIN DU RANG
GIS NYAMS SU LEN BYA'I CHOS KYI THUGS DE YANG MA NOR BA BSTAN
PA'I BDAG PO STON PA SANGS RGYAS LA THUG PA ZHIG DGOS,

Now the master translators of old undertook a great many hardships, journeying
afar to the land of India to bear authentic dharma teachings back here to Tibet.
But those in Tibet who followed a mistaken path couldn't live up to them at all.
Really good water should at the end of ends trace back to some pure snow. Just
so, whatever dharma we choose to practice should have its ultimate origin in
something infallible: in the very Lord of the Word, in the Teacher, in the Buddha.

CHOS KHUNGS MED LA LO STONG DU SGRUB PA BYAS KYANG RTOGS
PA TSAD LDAN SNE GCIG MI SKYE STE, MAR 'DOD NAS CHU BSRUB PA
DANG 'DRA BA YIN,

You can spend a thousand years struggling to practice some dharma teaching
that has no authentic origin, and you still won't get a single sliver of true
realization. It's like thrashing water to make butter.

DE LTAR NA NYAMS SU LEN BYA'I CHOS DE STON PA SANGS RGYAS
KYIS GSUNGS PA, PAndI TAS BAR DU LOG CHOS KYI SKYON ZHUGS MA
ZHUGS RTZOD PAS GTAN LA PHAB STE SKYON BSAL BA, GRUB PA'I
DBANG PHYUG RNAMS KYIS THOS BSAM SGOM GSUM MDZAD DE
RTOGS PA THUGS RGYUD LA 'KHRUNGS, DE NAS RIM GYIS BRGYUD PA
BCAS KHYAD CHOS DE GSUM DANG LDAN PA ZHIG DGOS,

Therefore we can say that the teaching we decide to practice should have three
distinguishing features:

- 1) It should have been taught by the Buddha.
- 2) It should have been cleaned of any errors: sages must have
brought the teaching to its authentic final form, having
examined it to determine whether any wrong ideas crept
into it after the Buddha taught it.

- 3) It should have brought true realizations to the hearts of master practitioners, once they have heard, considered, and meditated upon it. And then it must have passed to us through the various generations of an unbroken lineage.

DE BYUNG NA CHOS TSAD LDAN YIN PAS RANG GI SNYING RUS DANG
NYAMS LEN GYIS PHAR MA BSLUS NA CHOS KYIS TSUR BSLU DOGS MI
DGOS,

If the dharma we seek to practice has these three characteristics, it is authentic. We from our side still might fail it, through lapses in our effort and daily practice, but we need never fear that the teaching from its side will fail us.

DE NI LAM RIM 'DI YIN TE, SANGS RGYAS KYI GSUNG RAB KUN GYI RAB
DANG MCHOOG SHER PHYIN GYI MDO SDE RIN PO CHE YIN LA, DE'I
DNGOS BSTAN ZAB MO'I DON RNAMS LAM RIM DU ZAB MO'I LAM GYI
RIM PAR BSDUS, SHER MDO'I RGYA CHE BA'I DON RNAMS RGYA CHE
BA'I LAM RIM DU BSDUS NAS BSTAN PAS NYAMS SU LEN BYA'I CHOS
TSANG LA MA NOR BA NI BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI KHO NA
YIN PAS CHOS NYAMS LEN ZHIG 'ONG DU RE BA RNAMS KYIS NI NGES
PAR LAM RIM 'DI LA 'JUG DGOS,

And that authentic teaching is this very Steps to the path. The highest, the acme, of everything that the Buddha spoke is the precious collection of teachings on the perfection of wisdom. The overt subject matter of these teachings consists of the "instructions on the profound"—on emptiness. These are included in the Steps within those we call the "profound steps." The wisdom sutras also present what are known as the "far-reaching" instructions: those on working to save all living beings. These points are included in the Steps within those we call the "far-reaching steps." This then is why only the teaching on the Steps of the path is one both complete and free of error. And this is why people who are looking for a dharma teaching that is worthy of their practice should most surely begin the Steps.

'GA' ZHIG PHA MA RIGS RUS SOGS KYI ZHEN KHOG BLOS MTHONGS PAS
BON LA SOGS PA'I LOG CHOS KYIS BSLUS PA NI 'DI PHYI'I DON CHEN PO
RLUNG LA BSKUR BA RED,

We see a number of people who out of a mistaken loyalty to their family

traditions stick stubbornly to whatever beliefs their parents happened to have held. They follow the Bon or some similar mistaken path and in the end it fails them; the whole great purpose of the present life they live, and their future lives as well, is carried away on the wind.

MKHAS GRUB KHYUNG PO RNAL 'BYOR YANG DANG PO BON YIN, RJES
SU BON CHOS KYI KHUNGS PHYIN CI LOG TU GZIGS TE SNGAGS RNYING
MA LA ZHUGS, DE LA YANG SKYON YOD PAR MKHYEN NAS RGYA GAR
DU PHEBS, SNGAGS GSAR MA LA SBYANGS PA MTHAR PHYIN PA
MDZAD DE GRUB PA THOB PA RED, SA CHEN KUN SNYING SOGS
GZHAN YANG DE LTAR MDZAD PA MANG DU YOD,

That great accomplished sage, Kyungpo Neljor, was too a follower of Bon in the beginning.[75] Later on he realized that Bon had errant beginnings, and so he got into the earlier secret traditions. These too, he came to learn, were faulty—so he travelled to India. Here he studied the later secret traditions and brought his practice to its desired end, gaining the great accomplishments. And there were many others as well—the great Sakya lama Kun-nying, for example—who did the same.[76]

RGYAL SRAS DAM PA THAMS CAD KYIS BSNGAGS PA BRJOD CING DE
RNAMS GANG NAS GSHEGS PA'I LAM BZANG PO MA NOR BA, MA
'KHRUL BA, SKAL BA DANG LDAN PA'I GANG ZAG THAR PA 'DOD PA
RNAMS KYI 'JUG NGOGS TE 'JUG PA'I SGO DAM PA, DE LTA BU'I LAM GYI
GTZO BO RNAM PA GSUM PO DE JI LTAR NUS BZHIN BDAG GIS BSHAD
PAR BYA ZHES GSUNGS,

So now we can put the first verse into perspective. Lord Tsongkapa is saying, *"As far as I am able I'll explain the teaching on the three principal paths. It is that excellent path that all the Victors' holy sons commend with their praise, the path on which they travel. It has no error. It goes no mistaken way. It is the highest of all doorways: it is the entry point for those people of good fortune who are seeking freedom."*

JI LTAR NUS BZHIN ZHES PA NI SPYIR BTANG LA RJE RANG NYID KYIS
KHENGSKYUNGS PA'I TSIG DANG , DON DU 'DIR TSIG NYUNG NGU
ZHIG GI NANG DU DON RGYA GANG CHE ZHIG 'CHAD GANG THUB
MDZAD CES GSUNGS PA YIN,

The words "as far as I am able" in the verse are in general put there by Lord

Tsongkapa as an expression of modesty. More specifically they have the effect of saying, "As far as I am able I will explain something of as great meaning as can be put into the few words here."

YANG NA DE'I 'GREL LUGS GCIG LA RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB CES SOGS
TSIG RKANG DANG POS NI MTSAN BRJOD LAS,
 ,THEG PA GSUM GYIS NGES 'BYUNG LA,
 ,THEG PA GCIG GIS 'BRAS BUR GNAS,
 ,ZHES PA LTAR

There is another way of glossing the verse, according to which the first line of explanation—the one that includes the words "all high teachings of the Victors"—refers to renunciation. As *Chanting the Names* says,

The renunciation of all three vehicles
Lies in the end in a single vehicle.[77]

SANGS RGYAS KYIS DRANG DON DU THEG PA GSUM GSUNGS PA DE
NGES DON MTHAR THUG LA LTOS TE THEG PA GCIG TU GNAS SHING ,
DE BZHIN DU RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB THAMS CAD GDUL BYA'I RGYUD
LA MTHAR THUG GI NGES 'BYUNG SKYED PA'I THABS SU GSUNGS PAS,
THOG MAR 'KHOR BA LAS YID 'BYUNG NAS THAR PA THOB 'DOD KYI
BLO SKYE BA YANG NGES 'BYUNG GIS BSKUL TE SKYE BAS NA 'DIR YANG
THOG MAR NGES 'BYUNG GI BSAM PA BSTAN,

The point is that the Buddha, in some of his teachings which should be interpreted rather than taken literally, said that there were three different vehicles or ways. These three though are really only one, from the viewpoint of the ultimate end to which they lead. In a similar sense, all the high teachings of the Victors were enunciated as a means to produce the ultimate "renunciation"—the Buddha's knowledge—within the minds of disciples. And renunciation is what, at the very beginning, urges one to develop a disgust for the cycle of life and set his mind on reaching freedom. This is why the attitude of renunciation is taught here first, in the first line.

RGYAL SRAS DAM PA SOGS TSIG RKANG GNYIS PAS NI, RGYAL DANG
RGYAL SRAS RNAMS KYIS THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL DU MDZAD CING
BSNGAGS PA BRJOD PA, THEG PA CHEN PO'I LAM GYI SROG SHING LTA
BU BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS BSTAN,

The second line of explanation—the one that includes the words "their holy sons"—refers to the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being. This is the attitude that all the Victors and their sons take as their single most important meditation, and the attitude whose praises they sing. It is like a great center beam that holds up the entire structure of the greater way.

SKAL LDAN THAR 'DOD SOGS TSIG RKANG GSUM PAS NI THAR 'DOD KYI
GDUL BYA RNAMS KYI 'JUG NGOGS GCIG PU YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA
BSTAN, DE YANG THAR PA THOB PA LA 'KHOR BA'I RTZA BA MA RIG PA
GCOD DGOS, DE GCOD PA LA BDAG MED RTOGS PA'I SHES RAB SKYE
DGOS, DE SKYE BA LA YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA MA NOR BA ZHIG DGOS,

The third line of explanation—the one with the words "the fortunate seeking freedom"—refers to correct view. This perception is the one and only entry point for disciples who seek for freedom. To achieve freedom, you have to cut ignorance—the root of this circle of life. And to cut ignorance, you have to develop the wisdom which realizes no-self. And to develop wisdom, you need a correct view free of all error.

YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA NI ZHI BA MYANG 'DAS THOB PA'I SGO GCIG PU
YIN, DE YAN GYIS YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA BCAS LAM GTZO GSUM
BSHAD PAR DAM BCA' MDZAD PA YIN, BSHAD PAR DAM BCA' BA 'DIS
SLOB DPON DAnd"I DGONGS PA LTAR, GZHUNG DNGOS KYI BRJOD
BYA'AM BSHAD BYA'I LAM GYI LUS YONGS SU RDZOGS PA'I NGO BO
TSANG MA 'DI'I NANG DU BSDUS NAS GSUNGS PAS NA NGO BO NGES
PAR BSTAN PA'ANG YIN GSUNGS,

Correct view is the single door to nirvana, to peace. And so it is that the great Tsongkapa, in the closing words of the verse, pledges to compose his work on the three principal paths—which include correct view. His pledge is made in the way prescribed by Master Dandin:[78] he abbreviates within it all the topics to be treated in the work itself—which here would be to say he includes within his pledge every *essential* point in the entire body of the paths to be explained. In this sense, our Lama concluded, Lord Tsongkapa had in the first verse already taught us the essence of the paths.

Notes to Reading Four

[61.] *Sakya, Geluk, and Nyingma*: Names of three of the lineages that developed in Tibet for passing on the Buddha's teachings. The Geluk tradition began with Lord Tsongkapa himself.

[62.] *Every high teaching...* Textual source not located. Gungtang Jampeyang (1762-1823), also known as Gungtang Konchok Tenpay Dronme, was a student of the first reincarnation of the great Jamyang Shepa (see the Foreword and entry 27). He is known for his eloquent spiritual poetry and philosophical works; his incisive comments on the *Three Principal Paths* have been appended to the edition of Pabongka Rinpoche's commentary used for the present translation, and are included in the final section.

[63.] *I have come to the realization...* Lord Tsongkapa's letter to his teacher is still extant; the quoted lines appear on f. 69b (entry 67). The name "Dipamkara Jnyana" refers to Lord Atisha.

[64.] *the three collections*: Three principal divisions of the Buddha's teachings: the collection of vowed morality (which concerns principally the training on morality), the collection of sutra (principally the training of concentration), and the collection of knowledge (the training of wisdom).

[65.] *an abbreviated abbreviation...* Again, from the very brief version of Lord Tsongkapa's *Steps on the Path to Buddhahood* (f. 56a, entry 63).

[66.] *His wondrous word...* Source of quotation not found. See note 49 for the author's background.

[67.] *three distinguishing features and four greatnesses*: The three features that distinguish the teaching on the Steps from other instructions are that it includes all the subjects of both the open and secret teachings, is easily put to practice, and has come down to us through masters of the two great traditions described in note 195 (Pabongka Rinpoche, entry 47, ff. 48b-50b; Lord Tsongkapa, entry 61, f. 8b). The four greatnesses of the teaching are that one comes to realize all the teachings as consistent, one perceives all the scriptures as personal advice, one easily grasps the true intent of the Buddhas (none other than the three principal paths), and one automatically avoids the Great Mistake of disparaging any teaching (Lord Tsongkapa, entry 61, ff. 8b-14b; Pabongka Rinpoche, entry 47, ff. 41b-48b).

[68.] *the glorious Secret Collection*: One of the major secret teachings of the Buddha (entry 87).

[69.] *Jewel of Realizations*: Important text on the perfection of wisdom imparted to Master Asanga by Loving One; refer to note 46 (entry 44).

[70.] *Try to mix up all the systems...* Source of quotation not found. Tuken Dharma Vajra, also known as Lobsang Chukyi Nyima (1737-1802), was the third of the Tuken line of spiritual masters and is famed for his work on comparative Buddhist school systems, as well as for biographies of saints such as Changkya Rolpay Dorje, said to be the former life of Pabongka Rinpoche himself (see the Foreword, and also his collected works at entry 52).

[71.] *royal lama Jangchub Uw*: 11th Century ruler of the Guge kingdom of western Tibet, instrumental in bringing Lord Atisha and his teachings to the Land of Snows.

[72.] *It is this perfection...* The wording of the sutra as found in the Tibetan canon differs slightly, although the intent is the same (f. 206a, entry 84).

[73.] *Even in some insignificant business...* Quotation from f. 95a of his famed work on the three types of vows (entry 2, see also note 53).

[74.] *The point: if you don't meditate...* Source of quotation not found. See note 50 for information on its author.

[75.] *the sage Kyungpo Neljor (978-1079)*: His persistence in seeking the secret traditions in India and bringing them to Tibet is well documented in the *Blue Annals* (pp. 728ff., entry 94). Bon is the shamanistic religion which was prevalent in Tibet prior to the introduction of Buddhism.

[76.] *Sakya lama Kun-nying (1092-1158)*: Full name Kunga Nyingpo, son of the founder of the famed Sakya Monastery in north-central Tibet, and grandfather of the illustrious Sakya Pandita (see note 53).

[77.] *The renunciation of all three...* From a work in the secret teachings devoted to Gentle Voice (quotation from f. 10a, entry 25).

[78.] *Master Dandin*: Refer to the word "essence" back in his verse explained at

note 38.

The Key that Unlocks the Door to the Noble Path (Lam bzang sgo 'byed) written by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-91), a commentary upon the *Three Principal Paths (Lam-gtzo rnam-gsum)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), folios 10b-18b.

VI. Encouragement to Study

GSUM PA NYAN PAR BSKUL BA NI,
 ,GANG DAG SRID PA'I BDE LA MA CHAGS SHING ,
 ,DAL 'BYOR DON YOD BYA PHYIR BRTZON PA YIS,
 ,RGYAL BA DGYES PA'I LAM LA YID RTON PA'I,
 ,SKAL LDAN DE DAG DVANG BA'I YID KYIS NYON,
 ,ZHES PAS BSTAN,

We have now reached the third and final of the preliminaries that lead into the composition of the text. This one consists of a strong encouragement for the reader to study the work well, and is contained in the next verse of the root text:

(2)

**Listen with a pure mind, fortunate ones
Who have no craving for the pleasures of life,
And who to make leisure and fortune meaningful strive
To turn their minds to the path which pleases the Victors.**

DE YANG GANG DAG SRID PA'I BDE BA LA YID SKAD CIG KYANG MA
CHAGS PAR THAR PA THOB 'DOD CAN DAL 'BYOR THOB PA DON YOD
BYA PHYIR RTEN LAS SNYING PO LEN PAR 'DOD PA RNAMS KYIS NI LAM
LOG DANG , LAM GOL DANG , LAM GYI YAN LAG GAM CHA SHAS TZAM
MA YIN PAR SANGS RGYAS KYANG THUGS DGYES PA'I BZHED PA
MTHAR THUG LAM MA NOR BA, MA GOL BA, CHA TSANG BA ZHIG LA
SLOB DGOS, DE LTA BU'I LAM LA SLOB PAR 'DOD PA'I SLOB MA DE YANG
BZHI BRGYA PA LAS,

Here the great Tsongkapa is urging his readers to study the work: "You, you people who are seeking freedom and *have no* single moment's *craving for the pleasures of life*; you, who want to get the absolute most from the body you've found, *to make your leisure and fortune meaningful*; you now are going to have to train yourself in a path that never errs, a path that never strays, a path that is whole and complete, *the path which pleases even the Buddhas*—the one in the end they advise, a path that is no erring path, a path that is no path that strays, a path

that is more than just some piece or part of a path. And if you want to train yourself in a path like that, you're going to have to be a student who has all the requirements of a student; you're going to have to fit the description from the 400 Verses:

,GZUR GNAS BLO LDAN DON GNYER BA,
,NYAN PO SNOD CES BYA BAR BSHAD,

We call someone a proper vessel for study
Who's unbiased, intelligent, and willing to strive.[79]

,CES GSUNGS PA LTAR GYI MTSAN NYID DANG LDAN PA'I SLOB MA
CHOS LA YID RAB TU RTON PA'I SKAL LDAN GYI GDUL BYA RNAMS KYIS
NYAN TSUL 'GAL RKYEN SNOD KYI SKYON GSUM DANG BRAL ZHING ,
MTHUN RKYEN 'DU SHES DRUG BSTEN PA'I SGO NAS DVANG BA'I YID
KYIS NYON ZHES NYAN PAR BSKUL BA'O, ,

And *fortunate ones* like you, disciples who have *turned their minds* to the dharma, are going to have to *listen with a pure mind*; avoid in your study those things which are opposed to its success—the three problems of the pot; rely in your study on those things which are conducive to its success—the six images for the instruction." [80]

YANG 'DI'I DON 'GREL TSUL GCIG LA, GANG DAG SRID PA'I BDE LA MA
CHAGS SHING , , ZHES PA NGES 'BYUNG DANG , DAL 'BYOR DON YOD
SOGS NI BYANG SEMS TE BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LA BLO SBYANGS NA
DAL 'BYOR LA SNYING PO RAB CIG LON PA YIN, RGYAL BA DGYES PA'I
SOGS NI LTA BA LA SBYAR DGOS PA LAM GTZO'I GZHUNG NYID LAS,

There is another way of interpreting the verse which says we should regard the line about those "who have no craving for the pleasures of life" as referring to renunciation—the first of the three principal paths. The next line, the one about making your "leisure and fortune meaningful," applies then to the wish to achieve enlightenment for all living beings, because anyone who's trained his mind in this attitude has certainly gotten the absolute most from his life of leisure and fortune. And the final line, the one about the "path which pleases Victors," relates to correct view since, as the root text itself states later on,

,GANG ZHIG 'KHOR 'DAS CHOS RNAMS THAMS CAD KYI,
,RGYU 'BRAS NAM YANG BSLU BA MED MTHONG ZHING ,

,DMIGS PA'I GTAD SO GANG YIN KUN ZHIG PA,
,DE NI SANGS RGYAS DGYES PA'I LAM LA ZHUGS,
ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

A person's entered the path that pleases the Buddhas
When for all objects, in the cycle or beyond,
He sees that cause and effect can never fail,
And when for him they lose all solid appearance.

DE DAG GIS NI MCHOD BRJOD DANG , RTZOM PAR DAM BCA', NYAN
PAR BSKUL BA RNAMS SONG , LAM RIM CHE 'BRING SOGS LTAR NA RJE
BTZUN BLA MA RNAMS LA PHYAG 'TSAL LO, , ZHES PAS CHOS KHUNGS
BTZUN PAR BSTAN PA'I PHYIR MDZAD PA PO'I CHE BA DANG , RGYAL
BA'I GSUNG RAB NAS, BSHAD PAR BYA, , BAR GYIS CHOS KYI CHE BA
DANG , GANG DAG SRID PA'I NAS, YID KYIS NYON, , BAR GYIS NYAN
BSHAD JI LTAR BYA BA'I TSUL RNAMS BSTAN PA YIN, BSTAN BCOS SPYI'I
LUS DNGOS KYIS GDAMS PA DNGOS KYIS SLOB MA JI LTAR BKRI BA'I
RIM PA BSTAN PAS,

This then completes our presentation of the customary preliminaries: the offering of praise, pledge to compose the work, and encouragement for the reader to study it well. We can relate what we've said so far to the opening sections of works such as the greater and medium-length presentations of the complete Steps to Buddhahood. The line that reads "I bow to all the high and holy lamas" relates to the first section in these works, known as "demonstrating the eminence of the author in order to show that the teaching comes from an authentic source." The lines from "As far as I am able..." up to "...seeking freedom" correspond to the second section, on the "eminence of the teaching." The verse that goes from "Listen with a pure mind..." up to "...path which pleases the Victors" gives us the third section, which is "how to study and teach" the Steps. The last great section of these presentations is known as "the instruction itself, by which students can be led along the Steps" to Buddhahood. This part is contained in what we have called here the "main body of the text" of Lord Tsongkapa's verses on the three principal paths. Thus we now move on to the first one of these verses.[81]

THE FIRST PATH: RENUNCIATION

VII. Why You Need Renunciation

GNYIS PA BSTAN BCOS SPYI'I LUS DNGOS BSHAD PA LA BZHI, NGES

'BYUNG BSHAD PA, BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS BSHAD PA, YANG DAG PA'I
LTA BA BSHAD PA, NGES PA RNYED NAS SGRUB PA LA BSKUL BAR
GDAMS PA'O, , DANG PO LA GSUM, NGES 'BYUNG BSKYED DGOS PA'I
RGYU MTSAN, NGES 'BYUNG BSKYED PA'I TSUL, DE SKYES PA'I TSAD DO,
, DANG PO NI,

Our treatment of the main body of the text will break down into four parts: an explanation of renunciation, an explanation of the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being, an explanation of correct view, and some strong words of encouragement—that the reader should try to recognize the truth of these instructions and actually go and practice them. The explanation of renunciation itself will proceed in three sections: reasons why one should try to develop it, how one goes about developing it, and the point at which we can say one has succeeded in developing it. The first of these sections is found in the next verse of Lord Tsongkapa's work:

,RNAME DAG NGES 'BYUNG MED PAR SRID MTSO YI,
,BDE 'BRAS DON GNYER ZHI BA'I THABS MED LA,
,SRID LA BRKAM PA YIS KYANG LUS CAN RNAMS,
,KUN NAS 'CHING PHYIR THOG MAR NGES 'BYUNG BTZAL,
,ZHES PAS BSTAN TE,

(3)

**There's no way to end, without pure renunciation,
This striving for pleasant results in the ocean of life.
It's because of their hankering life as well that beings
Are fettered, so seek renunciation first.**

RANG CAG 'KHOR BA LAS THAR BAR BYED PA LA THAR 'DOD KYI BLO
SKYE DGOS, DE MA SKYES PAR 'KHOR BA'I PHUN TSOGS LA CHAGS NA
'KHOR BA LAS THAR THABS MI 'BYUNG BA,

Now for all of us to escape from the cycle of life, we have to want to escape. If we never develop the wish to get out, and we get attached to the good things of this circle of life, then there will never be any way to escape it.

DPER NA BTZON PA BTZON KHANG NAS THAR 'DOD DANG THAR BA'I
THABS LA MA 'BAD NA BTZON LAS MI THAR BA BZHIN DU 'KHOR BA
LAS THAR BA'I THABS LA MA 'BAD NA 'KHOR BA LAS THAR BA'I DUS MI

'BYUNG ZHING , DE LAS THAR 'DOD KYI BLO SKYES NA NAM ZHIG
'KHOR BA 'DI LAS THAR BA ZHIG 'ONG ,

A prisoner can sit in a jail, but if he never really wants to escape, and never really attempts an escape, he never will escape. It's the same for us—if we never try to find some way to escape this cycle of life, the day of our escape will never arrive. If we work to develop the wish to escape, then surely there will come a time when we do.

DE LA SNGON DU 'KHOR BAR 'KHOR TSUL SHES DGOS PAS, ZAG BCAS
NYER LEN GYI PHUNG PO'I RGYUN YANG NAS YANG DU LEN PA NI
'KHOR BA YIN, 'KHOR BA DER GANG GIS BCINGS NA LAS NYON GYIS
BCINGS, GANG DU BCINGS NA NYER LEN GYI PHUNG POR BCINGS PA
YIN,

Here first we have to understand just how we spin around in this life-circle. The "cycle of life" is defined as taking on, again and again, the impure groups of things that make up a normal suffering being—it is their unbroken stream from life to life.[82] What is it that chains us to this cycle? Our own deeds and bad thoughts. And to what exactly are we chained? To those impure parts of our being.

DE LAS THAR BAR BYED PA LA 'KHOR BA MTHA' DAG SDUG BSNGAL GYI
RANG BZHIN CAN DU MTHONG NAS DE LA SKYO SHAS DANG ZHEN
LOG DRAG POS NGES 'BYUNG SKYE DGOS, NGES 'BYUNG RNAM DAG CIG
MED NA SRID PA'I BDE 'BRAS DON DU GNYER BA'I BLO MI LDOG PA'I
STENG DU, 'DIR BRKAM PA ZHES PA SRED PA'I MING STE SRID PA'I BDE
BA LA SRED ZHEN GYI BLO SKYES PA'I DBANG GIS LUS CAN THAMS CAD
BCINGS NA, RANG CI'I PHYIR MI BCING STE 'CHING BAR BYED PAS NA
PHYIN CHAD 'KHOR BA LAS THAR BAR BYED PA LA THOG MAR NGES
'BYUNG RNAM PAR DAG PA ZHIG BTZAL DGOS PA YIN,

To get free of this cycle of life we must recognize that everything about it is, by nature, complete suffering. This brings a disgust for it, a loathing for it, and this then brings renunciation for it. Thus what the verse is saying is: *"Without pure renunciation, there's no way to stop this attitude where one strives for whatever pleasant results he might get here in life. Moreover, it is precisely by force of their feelings of attachment and craving for the pleasant things of life (here 'hankering' is another name for what we usually refer to as 'craving'), that all beings are fettered.* And if all beings are fettered, do you imagine that you are not? Of course

you are. If you want some day to escape this cycle, *seek then*, at the very *first*, a pure attitude of *renunciation*."

'DI LA SKYES BU CHUNG 'BRING GNYIS KYI LAM 'DU, 'GA' ZHIG GI SEMS
LA 'TSANG RGYA BA LA BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS MA GTOGS NGES
'BYUNG BSGOM PA MI DGOS BSAM MKHAN YOD KYANG , NGES 'BYUNG
NI THAR PA TZAM THOB PA LA YANG NGES PAR DGOS BAR MA ZAD, DE
YANG SHUGS DRAG PO DGOS TE, 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN
POS,

This verse by the way incorporates what the works on the Steps to Buddhahood refer to as the "instructions for those of lesser and of medium scope." We see some people around with the notion that to reach enlightenment you only need to practice the wish to achieve Buddhahood for all living beings—that you don't need to practice renunciation. The truth though is that, even just to reach a lower nirvana,[83] renunciation is an absolute necessity; in fact, it has to be *fierce* renunciation. As the great Tsongkapa, our Protector, has said himself:

BSAM PA 'DI SHA RA BA GSUNG BA LTAR, SING SKYUR LA BTAB PA'I
PHYE BZHIN KHA NA PHAR YAM ME BA ZHIG LAS MI 'DUG NA, 'KHOR
BA'I RGYU KUN 'BYUNG LA MI 'DOD PAR BLTA BA YANG DE 'DRA ZHIG
LAS MI 'ONG , DE LTAR NA SDUG KUN 'GOG PA'I 'GOG PA THAR PA DON
DU GNYER BA YANG DE DANG 'DRA, DE'I PHYIR THAR PA'I LAM LA
SGRUB PA BYED PAR 'DOD PA YANG TSIG TZAM DU 'GRO ZHING , SEMS
CAN GZHAN 'KHOR BAR 'KHYAMS PA'I SDUG BSNGAL MI BZOD PA'I
SNYING RJE YANG 'ONG SA MED LA, BLA NA MED PA'I BYANG CHUB KYI
SEMS MA BCOS PA YID SKUL BAR BYED NUS PA'I SHUGS CAN YANG MI
SKYE BAS, THEG PA CHEN PO YANG TSIG RJES 'BRANGS PA'I GO BA
TZAM DU 'GYUR BA YIN NO, ,

About this attitude—it's just the way Sharawa described it. Suppose it's no stronger in your heart than a thin film of barley powder spread out on the surface of some homemade beer. Then your feeling that you want to avoid the cause of the cycle of life—what we call the "origin"—will be no stronger than that. Then your aspiration to reach nirvana, where you stop both suffering and its origin, will be exactly the same way. And then your wish to practice the path that brings this nirvana will be nothing but empty words. So too for compassion, the state of mind where you can no longer bear to see other living beings wander through the cycle:

there's no way you will gain it. Then finally you will never find a genuine form of the wish to achieve matchless enlightenment for all living beings, a powerful wish that can urge you on. And so the "greater way" becomes for you nothing but some flimsy understanding of the descriptions you find of it in books.[84]

ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS RGYUD LA SKYE BA LA
SNGON DU SEMS CAN SDUG BSNGAL GYIS MNAR BA LA MI BZOD PA'I
SNYING RJE SKYE DGOS, DE SKYE BA LA RANG STENG DU SBYAR NAS
NGES 'BYUNG MA SKYES NA GZHAN STENG DU BSGOM PA'I SNYING RJE
SKYE THABS MED, JO BO CHEN POS KYANG , BYAMS PA DANG SNYING
RJE SBYONG MI SHES PA'I BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA' BOD KYIS SHES
GSUNGS NAS BKA' BKYON PA'I TSUL MDZAD PA YANG DON 'DI LA
DGONGS PA YIN GSUNGS,

The point here is that, to develop the wish to achieve enlightenment for all living beings, you must first develop a kind of compassion where you can no longer bear to see these beings tormented by the sufferings of life. To develop this, you must develop renunciation over your own situation; there is no way otherwise you could gain compassion, for it contemplates the situation that others must face. This too, concluded our Lama, is what Lord Atisha meant in his gentle rebuke to us Tibetans: "Only in Tibet have they found people with the wish for enlightenment who haven't yet found love and compassion." [85]

VIII. Stopping Desire for This Life

GNYIS PA NGES 'BYUNG BSKYED PA'I TSUL LA GNYIS, TSE 'DI'I SNANG
SHAS LDOG TSUL DANG , PHYI MA'I SNANG SHAS LDOG TSUL LO, ,
DANG PO NI,

This brings us to the second section of our explanation of renunciation; that is, a description of how to develop it. First we'll talk about how to stop desire for the present life, and then how to stop it for future lives. Stopping desire for this life is the subject of the next two lines of the root text:

,DAL 'BYOR RNYED DKA' TSE LA LONG MED PA,
,YID LA GOMS PAS TSE 'DI'I SNANG SHAS LDOG
,CES PAS BSTAN,

**Leisure and fortune are hard to find, life's not long;
Think it constantly, stop desire for this life.**

RANG TSE 'DI LA SU LAS LHAG PA'I LTO GOS SNYAN GRAGS SOGS PHUN
SUM TSOGS PA ZHIG BYUNG NA SNYAM DU TSE 'DI'I BDE SKYID DANG
KHE GRAGS 'DOD PA 'DI TSE 'DI'I SNANG SHAS RED, CHOS BYED PA LA
TSE 'DI'I SNANG SHAS LDOG PA ZHIG DGOS,

What we mean by "desire for this life" is this desire for happiness and fame in this life—where you say to yourself, "If only I could get more of the good things of life than anyone in the world—the best food, finest clothes, biggest name, and all the rest." Anyone who hopes to do some spiritual practice must stop his desire for this life.

DE LDOG PA LA DAL 'BYOR DON CHE RNYED DKA' DANG 'CHI BA MI
RTAG PA GNYIS BSAM NA TSE 'DI'I SNANG SHAS LOG STE TSE 'DI BLOS
THONGS PA ZHIG 'ONG , RANG RES DA LTA CHOS MA BYAS NA LTA CI,
BYAS KYANG CHOS SU MI 'GRO BA 'DI TSE 'DI'I SNANG SHAS MA LDOG
PAS LAN PA YIN, BLO SBYONG ZHEN PA BZHI BRAL LAS KYANG ,

How to stop it? You must contemplate the two Steps known as (1) the "great importance of this life of leisure and fortune, and the difficulty of finding it," as well as (2) our "impermanence, the fact that we must die." These thoughts then will turn back your desire for this life—in your mind, you will give up on it. The fact that you and I right now never do any spiritual practice—no, worse, the fact that we try and what we do is anything but spiritual practice—is all because of our desire for this life. *Free of Four Loves*, the mental-training text, puts it this way:

,TSE 'DI LA ZHEN NA CHOS PA MIN,
, 'KHOR BA LA ZHEN NA NGES 'BYUNG MIN, ,
ZHES GSUNGS PA RED,

No practitioner, a person who loves this life.
No renunciation, a mind that loves the cycle.[86]

CHOS DANG CHOS MA YIN PA'I SA MTSAMS DANG , CHOS GSHA' MA
YIN MIN TSE 'DI BLOS THONGS MA THONGS LA BYED, CHOS KHA TON
BYED PA DANG 'JIG RTEN GNYIS MNYAM DU 'ONG YANG , CHOS TSE 'DI
BLOS BTANG BA DANG 'JIG RTEN TSE 'DI LHUR LEN PA GNYIS MNYAM

DU MI 'ONG BAS CHOS DANG 'JIG RTEN GNYIS ZUNG 'BREL DU 'ONG
THABS MED PA YIN,

The border that separates spiritual practice from what is not, and the border that separates real spiritual practice from what is not, is this attitude of having given up on this life. Practice, in the form of reciting some lines, and the world may somewhere meet; but there is no way that practice in the form of giving up on this life will ever meet the world, in the form of happily participating in this life. There is no way you can keep the world, and still keep your practice.

DE LA DGONGS NAS DGE BSHES 'BROM RIN PO CHES KYANG BTZUN PA
ZHIG LA, JO BO BSKOR BA BYED PA YANG GLO BA DGA' STE, DE BAS
KYANG CHOS SHIG RANG BYAS NA DGA' ZHES SOGS PHYAG DANG KHA
TON DGOM PAS THAMS CAD LA DE LTAR GSUNGS PA NA DES CHOS JI
LTAR YIN MA SHES PAR 'O NA CHOS JI LTAR BYA BA ZHUS PAS, TSE 'DI
BLOS THONGS SHIG CES LAN GSUM GYI BAR NAN TAN DU GSUNGS PA
YIN,

This is what the precious preceptor, Drom Tonpa, had in mind when he said to a certain monk, "It makes my heart glad, uncle, to see you walking round this holy place to pay your respects; how much gladder would I be, if you did something spiritual!" And he went on to say the same thing about making prostrations, and reciting prayers, and meditating, and everything else. So finally the monk couldn't decide at all what was supposed to be spiritual practice and he asked Drom Tonpa, "Well then, how am I supposed to practice?" And the only answer he got was "Give up on this life!" —repeated three times, and loud.[87]

BJA' GDAMS PA'I DGE BSHES ZHANG SNA CHUNG STON PAS, JO BO LA
CHOS ZHUS KYANG TSE 'DI BLOS THONGS, BYAMS SNYING RJE BYANG
CHUB KYI SEMS BSGOM BYA BA RE LAS MI GSUNGS BYAS PAS,

Then there was the Seer geshe by the name of Shang Nachung Tonpa, who once said,

I go to Lord Atisha and ask him for teaching. But all he says to me
is some little sentence like "Give up on this life," or "Practice love,"
"Practice compassion," or "Practice the wish to achieve
enlightenment for all living beings."

DE 'BROM GYIS GSAN NAS DE GA JO BO'I GDAMS NGAG GI MTHIL
PHYUNG BA YIN PA LA, ZHANG LTA BUS KYANG CHOS ZHU MI

MKHYEN PA GSUNGS, RJES SU KHONG GIS KYANG CHOS BYED PA LA
TSE 'DI BLOS GTONG BA 'DI RANG GAL CHE GSUNGS PA YIN,

Lord Drom Tonpa overheard this complaint, and remarked that "It's amazing. He's just been granted the absolute essence of all Lord Atisha's instruction, yet even someone so great as Shang doesn't comprehend what it is to have a teaching." And later on in his life, Shang would also say to his students that "If you want to practice the spiritual life, the most important thing you can do is give up on this life." [88]

DE LA RGYAS PAR NA 'JIG RTEN CHOS BRGYAD DANG , DE DAG TSUR
BSDU NA TSE 'DIR ZHEN PA'I LTO GOS GTAM GSUM DU 'DU BAS 'DI
GSUM BLOS BTANG DGOS,

In a broad sense we can start with what are known as the "eight worldly thoughts." These then can be shortened into three concerns of this life: food, clothes, and a big name. These three are what you have to give up on.

'DI GSUM GYI NANG NAS KYANG GTAM 'DI SDUG SHOS YIN TE, MKHAS
PA DANG BTZUN PA DANG SGOM CHEN PHAL CHE BAS KYANG LTO LA
GYONG BSKUR NAS ME TOG BCUD LEN DANG RDE'U BCUD LEN TZAM
GYIS 'TSO BAR BYED, GOS LA GYONG BSKUR NAS SDUG TSAL BEM PO
GYON, SGAL PA BRAG LA SBYAR, BUG SGO 'DAG SBYAR BYAS TE
MTSAMS BSNYEN SGRUB LA BZHUGS KYANG , SEMS KYI GTING DE NAS
LUNG PA'I MI KUN GYIS NGA MTSAMS PA SGOM CHEN BZANG PO ZHIG
RED ZER DU RE BA'I GTAM SNYAN GRAGS 'DOD,

The worst of the three by the way is Big Name. Sages, holy men, great meditators of the past—even we can say a majority of them—have been able to live without great food, keeping themselves alive on one of those mystical practices where all you eat is some tiny pills or the essence of a flower. And they've been able to live without great clothes too: they sit in deep retreat, wearing tattered robes covered with dirt—they glue their backs to the wall of a cave and seal the only entrance. But in the bottom of their hearts they still crave fame—the Big Name—and they dream that all the local people outside are talking about what a holy master meditator they are.

MKHAS PA PAndI TA DANG DGE SLONG TSUL KHRIMS RNAM DAG
KYANG DE BZHIN DU BSLU BA MANG STE, RJE 'GRO BA'I MGON POS,
,MTSAMS BCAD YA THEM YI GE BRIS,

,MI DANG MI 'PHRAD SGOM CHEN YANG ,
,TSE 'DI'I SGOM CHEN BZANG LO 'DOD,

There have been many, many sages and scholars and monks who were pure in their moral lives but misled in this same way. As the great Droway Gonpo has said,

They go into seclusion, post a sign on the door,
See not a soul, these master contemplators who still
Hope in this life they call me the "Great Meditator." [89]

,CES DANG ,
,RNAME RTOG MI DRAN DGU DRAN 'DIS,
,CI BYED RNAMS LA 'DIS SLEBS PAS,
,DGE SBYOR CI BYAS LO LOR 'CHOR,
,THAMS CAD LO PA'I RTA PAS KHYER,
,DES NA TSE 'DI'I RNAME RTOG LA,
,MDUNG RE 'DEBS DGOS SKYES BU KUN,
, 'DI LA MDUNG RE MA THEBS NA,
,MKHAS BTZUN STON SGOM THAMS CAD KYIS,
,NGAN SONG GSUM GYI SGO MI KHEGS,
,ZHES DANG ,

As well as,

And so they fill their minds with hopes and plans,
Thoughts that come in everything they do,
And so their spiritual practice goes to waste,
Spirited away by bandit locals.
Take a spear then, strike it into every
Thought that comes for this life, and remember
Should a single spear not hit the mark
Being a sage, saint, scholar, meditator
Cannot close the door to the three lower realms.

MNGA' RIS PA CHEN POS, RANG GIS BYAS PA'I CHOS THAMS CAD TSE
'DI'I CHE THABS 'DI DON DU GNYER BAR SONG STE, DES RANG GI NGA
RGYAL PHRAG DOG ZHE SDANG 'DOD PA RGYAS PAR BYED PA'I KUN
'BYUNG 'KHOR BA'I RGYUR SONG BAS, CHOS BYAS SNYAM TZA NA DES
NGAN SONG DU BSKYUR BAS, SDIG PAS NGAN SONG DU SONG BA
DANG KHYAD MED, CES GSUNGS PA RED,

The great Ngaripa too has said,

All the spiritual practice you've done has turned into some ambition for eminence in this life. This then turns into what we call the "origin"—a cause for more of the cycle; it increases in you your feelings of pride, and jealousy, dislike for some things and longing for others. Then what you thought was spiritual practice actually takes you to the three lower realms. It's no different than if you'd gone there by doing bad deeds.[90]

DES NA BSHES SPRINGS LAS,

,JIG RTEN MKHYEN PA RNYED DANG MA RNYED DANG ,
,BDE DANG MI BDE SNYAN DANG MI SNYAN DANG ,
,BSTOD SMAD CES BGYI 'JIG RTEN CHOS BRGYAD PO,
,BDAG GI YID YUL MIN PAR MGO SNYOMS MDZOD,

,CES DANG , GRUB CHEN GLING RAS PAS KYANG ,

,KHOR BA RNAM RTOG GI GRONG KHYER NA,
,JIG RTEN CHOS BRGYAD KYI RO LANGS RGYU,
,DUR KHROD 'JIGS SU RUNG BA ZHIG DE NA GDA',
,BLA MA RO SNYOMS SHIG MDZAD NA DE RU MDZOD,

,CES GSUNGS PA LTAR RNYED BKUR BYUNG NA DGA', MA BYUNG NA MI
DGA' BA DANG , BDE BA BYUNG NA DGA', MA BYUNG NA MI DGA' BA,
SNYAN GRAGS BYUNG NA DGA', MA BYUNG NA MI DGA' BA, BSTOD RA
GTONG MKHAN BYUNG NA DGA', SMAD RA BYED MKHAN BYUNG NA
MI DGA' BA STE 'DI BRGYAD LA 'JIG RTEN CHOS BRGYAD CES ZER BA
YIN, CHOS BYED PA LA 'JIG RTEN CHOS BRGYAD 'DI MGO SNYOMS PA
DGOS,

Therefore if we want to do any spiritual practice we must quell the eight worldly thoughts—we must stand neutral, free of both members of each of its four pairs. "Eight worldly thoughts" is a name we give to the following eight emotions:

- 1) Being happy when we acquire some thing,
- 2) And unhappy when we don't.
- 3) Being happy when we feel good,
- 4) And unhappy when we don't.
- 5) Being happy when we become well known,
- 6) And unhappy when we don't.

- 7) Being happy when someone speaks well of us,
- 8) And unhappy when someone speaks ill of us.

As the *Letter to a Friend* states,

Oh worldly wise! To gain or not, feel good
Or not, be well-known or not, be spoken of
Well or ill, these are the eight worldly thoughts.
Quell them; let them not come to your mind.[91]

The great saint Lingrepa has said as well,

In the city of daily concerns in our circle of life
Scurry the waked cadavers of eight worldly thoughts.
This is where you can find the most frightening
cemetery of all;
This is where you lamas should keep your midnight
vigil among the dead.[92]

MKHAS BTZUN STON SGOM SU YIN YANG 'JIG RTEN CHOS BRGYAD
DANG 'DRES TE CHOS ZAB ZAB MO JI 'DRA ZHIG BYED KHUL BYAS
KYANG SNYING PO MED DE, RGYAL BA RGOD TSANG PA'I SLOB MA
YANG DGON PA'I ZHAL NAS,

It doesn't matter who you are—some great sage, or saint, or master, or meditator—and no matter how profound the practice you imagine you are doing, it is all a hollow sham if it's mixed up with the eight worldly thoughts. We find this truth in the words of Yang Gonpa, a disciple of the victorious Gu-tsangpa:

CHOS RDZOGS PA CHEN PO YIN PAS MI PHAN, GANG ZAG RDZOGS PA
CHEN POR 'GRO DGOS, CHOS SKAD LA RTA RI BA MANG PO BYAS NAS
GANG ZAG LA KHYI MI RI BA MANG PO MTHONG , CHOS TSIG RKYANG
DU SONG NAS LAG LEN LA MI 'DEBS PA DE NE TZO'I 'DON PA DANG
KHYAD MED, SEMS DANG CHOS KYI PHYE CHU MA 'DRES PAR CHOS
DANG GANG ZAG GI BAR NA HAR BA MI SHONG BA TZAM BYAS, CHOS
GLO BA'I TSOD MA BZHIN KHA LA CA LE BYAS PA DES CHOS KYI DGOS
DON MA 'GRUB PA LAGS MOD, NGAS NI TSE BLOS GTONG BA LA SGRUB
BA'I MTHIL DU BYAS PA YIN NO SKYES BU KUN, ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR
YIN,

It doesn't do any good that the teaching is the holy and secret "Great Completion." The person himself has to become holy and secret, great complete. We see a whole pack of cases where the way a person describes his spiritual practice, it would buy a whole herd of horses—but the person himself isn't worth a dog. Religion that's all words and never gets put into daily practice is all the same as some talk a parrot's been taught to squawk; the person and the practice are miles apart; his mind and his religion never quite mix into one, there's lumps of flour that never dissolve in the batter. Babbling on about spiritual practice and never letting it sink in, leaving it to bob around on the surface like some uncooperative vegetables in a soup, is missing the whole point of spiritual practice. I tell you all, what I teach as the crux of all practice is to give up on this life.[93]

DE'I PHYIR TSE 'DI'I CHOS BRGYAD BLOS MA THONGS NA CHOS 'ONG
RGYU PHAR BZHAG, NGAN SONG GI SKYE SGO TZAM YANG KHEGS PAR
DKA', CHOS BYED PA LA 'JIG RTEN CHOS BRGYAD MGO SNYOMS, TSE
BLOS GTONG BA'I MAN NGAG BKA' GDAMS PHUGS NOR BCU NYAMS SU
LEN DGOS, PHUGS NOR BCU ZHES PA GTAD PA BZHI, RDO RJE GSUM,
BUD SNYEGS THOB GSUM STE BCU YIN,

Therefore if a person fails to stand free of the eight worldly thoughts for this life he will find it hard even to shut the doors to a birth in the realms of misery, much less do something that's a spiritual practice. To do such a practice, you must take up the instruction called the "Ten Ultimate Riches"—a teaching of the masters called the Seers of the Word for quelling the eight worldly thoughts, and giving up on life. These ten "ultimate riches" are the following:[94]

The Four Aims.

The Three Diamonds.

The Three of Being Thrown Out,
and Reaching, and Attaining.

GTAD PA BZHI NI, BLO PHUGS CHOS LA GTAD, CHOS PHUGS SPRANG
LA GTAD, SPRANG PHUGS SHI LA GTAD, SHI PHUGS GROG PO SKAM PO
LA GTAD PA DANG BZHI,

The "four aims" are,

Aiming your mind ultimately to practice.
Aiming your practice ultimately to the beggar.
Aiming the beggar ultimately to death.
Aiming death ultimately to some dusty ravine.

RDO RJE GSUM NI, THEBS MED RDO RJE SNGON LA BTANG , KHREL MED
RDO RJE RJES LA BZHAG, YE SHES RDO RJE RANG DANG 'GROGS PA
DANG GSUM,

And the "three diamonds" are,

Sending the uncatchable diamond ahead of you.
Laying the unabashable diamond behind you.
Keeping the wisdom diamond at your side.

BUD SNYEGS THOB GSUM NI, MI GRAL NAS BUD, KHYI GRAL BSNYEGS,
LHA GRAL THOB PA STE GSUM MO, ,

The three of "being thrown out, and reaching, and attaining," are, lastly,

Being thrown out from the ranks of men.
Reaching the ranks of dogs.
Attaining the ranks of the gods.

DE YANG BLO PHUGS CHOS LA GTAD PA NI, DA RES RNYED DKA' DON
CHE'I DAL 'BYOR GYI RTEN BZANG PO LAN GCIG TZAM RNYED PA 'DI
YUN RING POR MI GNAS PAR 'CHI BAR NGES SHING NAM 'CHI CHA MED
PA DANG , 'CHI BA'I TSE YANG DAM PA'I CHOS KHO NA MA GTOGS TSE
'DI'I RNYED BKUR SNYAN GRAGS SOGS DPAL 'BYOR LONGS SPYOD JI
TZAM YOD KYANG CUNG ZAD TZAM YANG MI PHAN PAR BSAMS NAS
CHOS BYED PA YIN,

"Aiming your mind ultimately to practice" means to practice religion with the following thoughts: This time I've been able to obtain a good human body and circumstances; they are extremely hard to find, they are incredibly valuable, and they include all the necessary leisure and fortune. This is the one and only time I will have such a life. And it will not be here long; it is absolutely sure that I will die, I have no way of knowing when my death will come. And when I die, only this holy spiritual practice will be of any use to me. All the things and honors I

have gathered in this life, every bit of fame I've gained, everything else of the money and possessions I may have with me, will not be the slightest help to me.

CHOS PHUGS SPRANG LA GTAD PA NI, 'O NA TSE 'DI'I BDE THABS MA
BSGRUBS PAR CHOS BYAS NA CHOS KYI MTHUN RKYEN TZAM YANG
MED PAR SPRANG PO BYAS MI YONG NGAM SNYAM NA, NGAS CHOS
KYI PHYIR DU DKA' BA SPYAD NAS SPRANG PO BYAS NA'ANG BYAS, ZAS
GOS NGAN NGON SLONG MO BRGYAB PA TZAM GYIS 'TSO BAR BYAS
NAS CHOS SGRUB NUS PAR BYED SNYAM PA'O, ,

"Aiming your practice ultimately to the beggar" is like this: Suppose you think to yourself "But well now, if I stop trying to do what it takes to live well in this life so I can do my spiritual practice, I'm afraid that I won't even find the bare necessities for doing the practice: I'll become a beggar." Think then to yourself this way: "I will undertake any hardship for my practice; and if it means I have to become a mere beggar, then let me become a beggar. I will find a way to do my practice, even if I have to live on lousy scraps of food that I beg off others, and wear any old clothes they give me."

SPRANG PHUGS SHI LA GTAD BA NI, NGAS CA LAG PHRAN BU MA
BSAGS PAR DE LTAR SPRANG PO BYAS TE CHOS SGRUB KHUL BGYIS NA
MI TSE YANG 'KHYOL THABS MI 'DUG, LTO GOS MED PAR SHI YONG
SNYAM PA BYUNG NA, NGAS TSE RABS SNGA MA MANG POR CHOS KYI
DON DU SROG GTONG MA MYONG BA LA, DA RES CHOS BSGRUBS NAS
SHI THUB NA GO BCAD, LAR NAS PHYUG PO DANG SPRANG PO TSANG
MA 'CHI RGYU YIN PA 'DRA BA LA, PHYUG PO YONG RGYU'I DON DU
SDIG BSAGS NAS 'CHI BA LAS, CHOS LA DKA' BA SPYAD NAS 'CHI RGYU
BYUNG NA DON CHEN PO GRUB PAS NA, CHOS KYI PHYIR DU 'KHYAG
RIS SHI NA'ANG SHI , LTOGS RIS SHI NA'ANG SHI SNYAM DU CHOS BLOS
MI GTONG BA YIN,

"Aiming the beggar ultimately to death" means never giving up on your practice. Suppose you think to yourself, "So I try to do some practice, and I turn into a beggar, because I haven't taken the time to collect even the single smallest material thing. But then I won't even have what it takes to sustain this human life. I'm afraid some day I'll die, without enough food, without enough clothes." But instead you should think this way: "In all my many previous lives, I've never given up my life for the sake of my practice. If I can die this one time trying to practice, I might make up for it. And anyway we are all the same: rich or poor, we all are going to die. Rich people, to get rich, have collected a lot of bad deeds

and will die with them. I, on the other hand, will accomplish something of very great meaning if I die from the hardships of trying to practice. So if for my practice I freeze to death, let me freeze. If for this I starve, let me starve."

SHI PHUGS GROG PO SKAM PO LA GTAD PA NI, RANG LA YO BYAD
GTAN NAS MED NA, RANG NA BA DANG , RGAS PA DANG , 'CHI DUS
TSUN CHAD LA G-YOG BYED MKHAN DANG , RO SKYEL BYED TSUN
CHAD DGOS SNYAM PA YANG TSE 'DI'I PHUN TSOGS LA ZHEN PA YIN,
RANG NYID LO RGAS RGAS BAR DU TSE RING POR SDOD PA'I NGES PA
GTAN NAS MED PAS, DE BAS CHOS BSGRUBS NAS RANG LA BLTA
MKHAN MED PAR GROG PO SKAM PO'I NANG DU KHYI SHI BA LTAR RO
LA 'BU BRGYAB KYANG RUNG SNYAM DU GANG LA'ANG MA CHAGS
PAR DBEN PA'I RI KHROD DU CHOS SGRUB PA YIN,

"Aiming your death ultimately to some dusty ravine" comes like this: Suppose you think to yourself, "But there are certain things that I need from now up to the time I die. If I don't have any money at all, how am I going to get someone to help me when I'm sick? Who will attend me in my old age? Who will be there at my deathbed? And who will take care of things after I die—who will take the body away, and all the rest?" All these kinds of thoughts come under the category of attachment to the good things of this life. There's no way at all you can be sure that you'll even live long enough to reach any old age. Better to go to some lonely mountain retreat, and give up attachment to anything at all, and think to yourself "Now I'm going to practice, and I don't care if I die like some stray dog in a dusty ravine, with no one to look after me, and maggots crawling all over the corpse."

THEBS MED RDO RJE SNGON LA BTANG BA NI, RANG GIS DE LTAR BLOS
BTANG NAS CHOS SGRUB PA LA, PHA MA NYE 'BREL MDZA' GROGS LA
SOGS PAS JI TZAM BSHOL BTAB KYANG BSHOL THEBS MI THUB PAR
GNYEN BSHES BRTZE GDUNG CHE BA SNYING DANG 'DRA BA RNAMS
MYA NGAN DANG BCAS BZHIN MIG MCHI MA TZA RE LUS KYANG YID
RDO RJE LTAR MI 'GYUR BAS GDUNG SEMS DANG CHAGS SEMS MED
PAR DBEN PA'I RI KHROD DU SONG NAS CHOS RNAM DAG BYED PA
ZHIG DGOS,

"Sending the uncatchable diamond ahead of you" has this meaning: You may be able to give up on life as described above, and start to try your practice. But then your parents and other family, your friends and all the rest will try to catch you and bring you back. Make yourself uncatchable; keep your mind as firm and

unchanging as a diamond, even if you have to leave behind your most beloved family and friends, those close to you as the heart in your breast, standing with tears in their eyes from the pain. Leave, go to some lonely mountain hermitage, without any regrets, without any attachments. Stay there and devote yourself to the purest of practice.

KHREL MED RDO RJE RJES LA BZHAG PA NI, TSE BLOS BTANG NAS 'GRO
BA NA, MI TSOS KHO SPRANG 'KHYAMS THA CHAD RED ZER BA SOGS
ZHE KHREL 'PHYA SMOD GANG 'DRA ZHIG BYAS KYANG , BZANG PO
LHA LTA BU RED ZER NA'ANG ZER, NGAN PA 'DRE LTA BU RED ZER
NA'ANG ZER, NGA LA KHYAD MED, TSE 'DI PA'I MDZA' BSHES KYI NGO
BSRUNG BYED PA NI NYES PA MANG PO'I 'BYUNG GNAS, CHOS SGRUB
PA'I BAR CHAD YIN SNYAM DU BLOS BTANG BA ZHIG DGOS,

"Laying the unabashable diamond behind you" looks like this: Suppose you do give up on this life, and leave. People will despise you, and condemn you, and say things like "Now he's nothing but a useless wandering beggar." But whatever they say you must give up on all of it, and think to yourself, "If they say I'm as pure as a god, that's fine. If they say I'm as evil as a devil, that's fine too. It doesn't make any difference to me. Trying to keep up a good image with friends who are all devoted to this life can lead to a great many problems, and acts as a great obstacle to spiritual practice."

YE SHES RDO RJE RANG DANG 'GROGS PA NI, JI LTAR BRTZAMS PA'I
DAM BCA' LAS NAM YANG MI 'DA' BAR SNYING PO MED PA'I 'DI SNANG
GI BYA BZHAG THAMS CAD GTAN DU SPANGS TE, CHOS KYI BSAM PA
BRTAN POS TSE DANG SGRUB PA SNYOMS PAR BYED PA YIN,

"Keeping the wisdom diamond at your side" means never transgressing the pledge you have made to yourself. Abandon, and abandon forever, all the absolutely meaningless actions you do out of desire for this life. Keep your mind in the spiritual, firmly, and make your life and your practice one and the same.

MI GRAL NAS BUD PA NI, 'DI SNANG GI PHUN TSOGS LA DGRAR BLTAS
NAS TSE 'DI DON GNYER CAN GYI MTHO DMAN SU DANG YANG SNANG
BA MI BSTUN PAR SMYON PA'I SPYOD PA LTAR TSE 'DI PA'I MI'I GRAL
NAS BUD PA YIN,

"Being thrown out from the ranks of men" comes like this: Now you will start to see that desiring the good things of this present life is your real enemy. Your whole

outlook then will start to clash with the outlook that other men have, men high or low, who all nonetheless strive for this life's happiness. To them you are acting like a madman, and so you will be thrown out from the ranks of men—men who live for this life.

KHYI GRAL SNYEGS PA NI, LTO GOS GTAM GSUM LA GYONG BSKUR,
CHOS KYI PHYIR DU BKRES SKOM NGAL DUB JI TZAM BYUNG YANG
BSRAN BZOD PAR BYED PA DE RED,

"Reaching the ranks of dogs" means that you live your life without any great food, or clothes, or reputation. For the sake of your practice, you endure whatever comes to you in the way of hunger, or thirst, or tiredness.

LHA GRAL THOB PA NI, DBEN PA'I GNAS SU 'JIG RTEN GYI BYA BZHAG
THAMS CAD BLOS BTANG STE SGRUB PA MTHAR BSKYEL BA NA LHA YI
YANG LHA SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG TSE 'DI LA THOB PA YIN,

"Attaining the ranks of the gods" starts with going to some secluded place, and giving up on all the normal activities of the world. You bring your practice to its desired end, and within this very life attain the state of a Buddha—the very god of gods.

DE LTAR BLOS BTANG NAS CHOS SGRUB NA SPRANG POR SONG STE MU
GES SHI YONG BA'I DOGS PA BYA MI DGOS, 'JIG RTEN PA LTOGS NAS SHI
BA SRID KYANG CHOS PA LTOGS RIS SHI BA GTAN NAS MI SRID DE,
STON PA THUGS RJE CAN MNGON PAR RDZOGS PAR SANGS RGYAS PA'I
TSE 'KHOR SGYUR DRUG KHRI'I SKYE BA BZHES RGYU'I BSOD NAMS
LHAG POR LUS PA RNAMS STON PA'I RJES 'JUG RNAMS KYI 'TSO BA'I
MTHUN RKYEN DU BSNAGS PA DANG , SNYING RJE PAD DKAR DU,

By the way, you need never fear that if you give up on things to practice the way we've described it above you'll become some poor beggar and starve to death. It is possible for a worldly person to die of hunger, but absolutely impossible for a religious practitioner to do so. This is because our compassionate Teacher, when he reached the state of total enlightenment, still had merit enough from his past deeds to go and take some 60,000 births as a "Wheel Emperor"—one of those incredibly powerful beings who rule the entire world. Instead he took the fantastic power of these deeds and dedicated it to the food and other necessities that all his future followers might require. In the *White Lotus, the Sutra on Compassion*, we hear the following oath from the Buddha as he first commits

himself to reaching enlightenment for the sake of living kind:

SANGS RGYAS KYIS THUGS BSKYED PA'I SKABS SU, NGA'I BSTAN PA LA
CHOS GOS NGUR SMRIG SOR BZHI 'CHANG BA LA YANG BZA' BTUNG
BSAM PA BZHIN MA BYUNG NA, BDAG GIS SANGS RGYAS BSLUS PAS
SANGS RGYAS MI THOB PAR GYUR CIG, CES GSUNGS PA DANG ,

And in the days when my teachings spread in the world, any man
who wears so much as four inches of the saffron robe shall find
food and drink to his heart's desire. If he does not, then I shall have
cheated the state of Buddhahood. And then may I lose my
Buddhahood.[95]

MA 'ONGS PA NA 'JIG RTEN NA MU GE BYUNG STE MU TIG BRE GANG
DANG RTZAM PA BRE GANG BRJE DGOS PA'I DUS BYUNG YANG STON
PA'I RJES 'JUG RNAMS 'TSO BAS MI PHONGS PAR GSUNGS PA DANG ,

The Buddha also says,

In future days, there will come in the world a time of famine, when
men must pay a box of pearls to buy a box of flour. Not even in
such days will a follower of the Teacher ever want for life's
necessities.[96]

,KHYIM PA'I SKYE BO THAMS CAD KUN,
,SEN MO'I STENG DU ZHING RMOS KYANG ,
,NGA YI RAB TU BYUNG BA RNAMS,
, 'TSO BAS PHONGS PAR MI 'GYUR RO,
,ZHES TSAD MA'I BKA' SLU BA MED PAS MDO SDE SOGS LAS GSUNGS,

And finally Lord Buddha has stated,

Householders, each and every one,
May plow their crops on a fingernail,
But those who've left their homes for me
Will never want for necessities.

These quotations are taken from the collection of sutras and the like; they are the
words of a being who cannot lie, and whose words can never fail.

TSE BLOS GTONG ZHES PA'I BLOS GTONG RGYU'I GTZO BO 'DI SNANG
CHOS BRGYAD KYI ZHEN PA DE BLOS THONG BA DGOS, DE THONGS NA
YO BYAD THAMS CAD GTOR NAS SPRANG PO BYED PA ZHIG NGES PAR
MI DGOS TE, DAM PA TSOS TSE BLOS THONGS PA'I TSAD LA RGYAL
MCHOGBSKAL BZANG RGYA MTSO DANG , PAn CHEN BLO BZANG YE
SHES SOGS 'JOG PAR MDZAD PA YIN,

Now when we say to "give up on this life," the main thing that you have to give up is those eight worldly thoughts or attachments, towards the pleasures of this life. Giving up these thoughts doesn't necessarily mean that you have to throw away all your material possessions and become a beggar. Holy teachers of the past have pointed out for us examples of people who succeeded in giving up on life, and these have included personages of fantastic material wealth such as Gyalchok Kelsang Gyatso and the Panchen Lobsang Yeshe.[97]

GZHAN YANG BDAG CAG GI STON PA THUGS RJE CAN GYIS 'KHOR
SGYUR GYI RGYAL SRID SPANGS TE RAB TU BYUNG BA DANG , RGYAL
SRAS ZHI BA LHA DANG , JO BO CHEN PO DPAL LDAN AA TI SHA SOGS
KYANG RGYAL SRID SPANGS TE RAB TU BYUNG , RJE TZONG KHA PA
CHEN POS KYANG SLOB MA SDE SNOD 'DZIN PA STONG PHRAG LA NYE
BA SOGS MIG MCHI MA DZAR RE BZHAG STE 'JAM DBYANGS KYI BKA'
BZHIN 'KHOR DAG PA RNAM BRGYAD TZAM LAS MED PAR BYA BRAL
LA GSHEGS PA DANG , DE DUS KYI RGYA NAG GONG MAS GSER YIG PA
DANG T'A ZHIN SOGS CHED DU BRDZANGS TE GDAN 'DREN ZHUS
KYANG GDAN MA 'DRONGS PA DANG ,

Then too there is our own Teacher, the compassionate Buddha, who could have had the kingdom of a World Emperor, but gave it up and left the home life. The princes Shantideva and the Great Lord, the glorious Atisha, also relinquished their thrones and left the home.[98] The mighty Lord Tsongkapa as well, acting on the instructions of Gentle Voice, left behind close to a thousand learned students with tears in their eyes, and everything else he had, to go into isolation with but a few hand-picked disciples: the followers known as the "Purest Eight." The Emperor of China in those days even dispatched a letter with his golden seal, carried forth by a Tashin and other high officials, inviting Lord Tsongkapa to the imperial court—but could not induce him to come.[99]

DAM PA DE DAG GIS 'TSO BA DKA' THUB DANG BSOD SNYOMS TZAM LA
BR TEN, SGRUB PA LHUR MDZAD PA SOGS KYANG JO BO BKA' GDAMS
PA'I PHUGS NOR BCU'I DON PHYAG BZHES SU MDZAD PA RED,

These high beings lived only off their own asceticism and whatever food someone might offer them. They spent their days striving to perfect their practice, and in such activities led a way of life that followed the real meaning of the Ten Ultimate Riches—the teaching of Lord Atisha and the Seers of the Word.

DER MA ZAD, TSE GCIG LUS GCIG LA SANGS RGYAS PA RGYAL BA DBEN
SA PA CHEN PO'I ZHAL NAS,

,SNGON DUS KYI MID LA RAS PA DANG ,
,DA DUS KYI BLO BZANG DON GRUB LA,
,PHRAL CHAS KYI ZAS GOS MA GTOGS PA,
,NOR DNGOS PO 'DZIN PAS DGOS PA MED,
,TSE GCIG LA SANGS RGYAS BSGRUB PA LA,
,DE 'DRA'I SPYOD LA LEGS GNAS NAS,
,CHAGS SDANG SPANGS PA'I DBEN GNAS SU,
,DAL 'BYOR LA SNYING PO LEN PAR SHOG
,CES DANG ,

Many are the holy songs of experience from those who have given up this life. The great victor Wensapa, who achieved Buddhahood in this one human life, in this one man's body, spoke the following:

Milarepa, of days gone by,
And Lobsang Dundrup in our times
Had no need for keeping a single thing
Beyond today's food and the clothes they wore.
Make the most of your leisure and fortune:
In isolation, from like and dislike;
Live life well, follow this way,
Reach enlightenment in this one life.[100]

RNAL 'BYOR GYI DBANG PHYUG MID LA'I ZHAL NAS KYANG ,
,BU SNYING NAS LHA CHOS BYA BSAMS NA,
,DAD PA ZHIG GTING NAS SKYES PA NA,
,TSE 'DI LA PHYI MIG MI LTA NA,
,BDEN PAR NGA PHYIR 'BRANG BA NA,
,GNYEN 'DUN BDUD KYI BSHOL 'DEBS YIN,
,BDEN NO MA SNYAM 'KHRI BA CHOD,
,ZAS NOR BDUD KYI SO PA YIN,
,DRIS SHING NGAN NO 'DZIN CHAGS SPONGS,

, 'DOD YON BDUD KYI ZHAGS PA YIN,
 , 'CHING BAR NGES SO ZHEN PA THONGS,
 , GZHON GROGS BDUD KYI BU MO YIN,
 , SLU BAR NGES SO KHONG ZON GYIS,
 , PHA YUL BDUD KYI BTZON RA YIN,
 , THAR BAR DKA' YIS MYUR DU BROS,
 , LAR THAMS CAD BZHAG NAS 'GRO DGOS NA,
 , DUS DA LTA BZHAG NA DON CAN LAGS,
 , SGYU LUS KYI THO YOR CIS KYANG 'GYEL,
 , DUS DA LTA RTEN 'BREL BSGRIGS NA LEGS,
 , SEMS KYI BYA RGOD CIS KYANG 'PHUR,
 , DUS DA LTA NAM DPANGS BCAD NA LEGS,
 , MI NGA ZER DE TSO NYAN SPYOD NA,
 , BU KHYOD LA LHA CHOS KYI SKAL BA YOD,
 , CES DANG ,

The great master of all master meditators, Milarepa, has said as well:

If in your heart you wish to keep the holy
 practice, son,
 Within the very depths of it then find
 this thing first—faith,
 Never turn and look back once again
 upon—this life.
 If in truth you'll follow after me,
 Your loved ones turn to demons, hold you back;
 Do not think them true—cut all the ties.
 Food and money are the demons' advance guard;
 The closer the worse, give up all want for them.
 The objects of the senses are the demons' snare;
 "They will entrap me!" stop your craving them.
 Your young love is the daughter of the demons;
 "She will mislead me!" so be on your guard.
 The place you grew up is the demons' prison;
 Hard to free yourself from, flee it quick.
 You will have to leave it all behind and
 go on—later,
 Why not make it meaningful and leave it
 all—right now?
 It will fall down one day anyway, this

mannequin apparition;
Better to use this body now, get off to a
good quick start.
This skittish bird of mind will anyway fly
from the corpse one day;
Better now to soar across some wide
expanse of sky.
If you listen and act upon this one man's
words—of mine,
Then the grace to keep the holy practice,
my boy—is yours.[101]

,NGA SKYID PA GNYEN GYIS MTSOR ZHING ,
,SDUG PA DGRA YIS MA TSOR BAR,
,RGAS PA GROGS KYIS MA TSOR ZHING ,
,NA BA SRING MOS MA TSOR BAR,

,RI KHROD 'DI RU 'CHI NUS NA,
,RNAL 'BYOR BSAM PA RDZOGS PA YIN,
,SHI BA MI YIS MA TSOR ZHING ,
,RO RUL BYA YIS MA MTHONG BAR,

,RI KHROD 'DI RU 'CHI NUS NA,
,RNAL 'BYOR BSAM PA RDZOGS PA YIN,
,SHA RUS SBRANG MAS 'JIB PA DANG ,
,RTZA RGYUS 'BU YIS ZA BA RU,

,RI KHROD 'DI RU 'CHI NUS NA,
,RNAL 'BYOR BSAM PA RDZOGS PA YIN,
,NGA SGO NA MI RJES MED PA DANG ,
,NANG NA KHRAG RJES MED PA RU,

,RI KHROD 'DI RU 'CHI NUS NA,
,RNAL 'BYOR BSAM PA RDZOGS PA YIN,
,RO LA 'KHOR MI MED PA DANG ,
,SHI NA DU MI MED PA RU,

,RI KHROD 'DI RU 'CHI NUS NA,
,RNAL 'BYOR BSAM PA RDZOGS PA YIN,
,NGA GAR SONG 'DRI MI MED PA DANG ,

, 'DIR SONG GTAD SO MED PA RU,

, RI KHROD 'DI RU 'CHI NUS NA,
, RNAL 'BYOR BSAM PA RDZOGS PA YIN,
, MI MED LUNG PA'I BRAG PHUG TU,
, SPRANG PO SHI BA'I SMON LAM 'DI,
, 'GRO BA'I DON DU THEBS PAR SHOG,

THEBS NA BSAM PA RDZOGS PA YIN, , ZHES GSUNGS PA RED, 'DI DAG
KYANG TSE BLOS BTANG BA'I GSUNG MGUR YIN,

He said too,

No way my loved ones know I'm glad,
No way my enemies know I'm sad;
If I can die here in this cave
My hermit's wishes have come true.

No way my friends know I've got old,
No way my sister knows I'm sick;
If I can die here in this cave
My hermit's wishes have come true.

No way that people know I've died,
No rotting corpse that vultures spy;
If I can die here in this cave
My hermit's wishes have come true.

Flies will suck my meat and bones,
Maggots eat tendons, ligament;
If I can die here in this cave
My hermit's wishes have come true.

No footprints leading from my door,
No bloodstains left here on the floor;
If I can die here in this cave
My hermit's wishes have come true.

No one to hold a deathbed vigil,
No one to weep when I am gone;

If I can die here in this cave
My hermit's wishes have come true.

No one to wonder where I went
No one who knows where I am found;
If I can die here in this cave
My hermit's wishes have come true.

May this death prayer of a beggar
In the wild of a mountain cave
Come to help all living beings;
Then my wishes have come true.[102]

'DI SNANG GI CHOS BRGYAD BLOS GTONG BA'I MAN NGAG GI SNYING
PO LTA BU NI 'CHI BA MI RTAG PA BSGOM PA NYID YIN KYANG , RANG
CAG GIS DANG POR DAL 'BYOR DON CHEN RNYED DKA' NAS RIM GYIS
BLO SBYANG NA GNAD DU SMIN PA YONG ,

Now there is one instruction which we can call the very essence of all the teachings on how to get rid of the eight worldly thoughts of this life. This is the meditation on one's own impermanence and death. People like us though must prepare our minds for this meditation by first contemplating how valuable, and how hard to find, our present life of leisure and fortune is. Then gradually we will be ripe for the realization of death.

RJE THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA'I ZHAL NAS,
,DAL BA'I RTEN 'DI YID BZHIN NOR LAS LHAG
, 'DI 'DRA RNYED PA DA RES TZAM ZHIG YIN,
,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 BYAS,
,THAR 'DOD KHYED KYANG DE BZHIN BSKYANG 'TSAL LO , ,

The all-knowing Lord Tsongkapa has said himself,

This body of leisure's more valuable than
a jewel that gives any wish,
And now is the only time you will ever

find a one like this.
It's hard to find, and easily dies,
like lightning in the sky.
Think this over carefully, and come
to realize
That every action of the world is like
the chaff of grain,
And so you must strive night and day
to make the most of life.
I, the master meditator, put this
into practice;
You, who seek for freedom, must
conduct yourselves this way.[103]

ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR 'JIG RTEN CHOS BRGYAD BLOS BTANG STE
SGRUB PA NYAMS LEN GSHA' MA ZHIG YONG BA LA DAL 'BYOR DON
CHE RNYED DKA' DANG , 'CHI BA MI RTAG PA GNYIS KYI RTOGS PA
SKYE BA ZHIG DGOS, DE SKYES NA RI THAMS CAD GSER DANG , CHU
THAMS CAD 'O MA, MI THAMS CAD RANG GI BRAN DU GYUR KYANG MI
MKHO BA SKYUG NAD CAN LA BTZO ZAN BYIN PA LTAR ZHEN PA
GTING NAS LOG PA ZHIG YONG , RTOGS PA DE YANG THOS BYUNG
GZHAN STOPS KYIS SKYES PAS MI CHOG PAR, BSAM BYUNG RANG
STOPS KYIS SKYES NA GZHAN DU MI 'GYUR BAR BRTAN PO 'ONG BA
YIN,

The point here is that, to rid yourself of the eight worldly thoughts and undertake a spiritual practice which is truly pure, you must gain two different realizations: first, of how valuable and hard to find one's life of leisure and fortune is; secondly, of one's own impermanence and the fact that he must die. Once you gain these realizations, it doesn't matter—the hills can turn to gold, the rivers into milk, and every man your slave—but to you it's all repulsive, useless, like a feast set before a sick man vomiting. And it's not enough for these realizations to come to you just from the outside—from sitting and listening to someone describe them. They must come from the inside, from thinking about them yourself. Then they will be firm in your mind, and never change again.

DE YANG GZHUNG DU, DAL 'BYOR RNYED DKA' ZHES PAS DAL 'BYOR
NGOS BZUNG BA DANG , DON CHE BA BSAM PA, RNYED DKA' BA BSAM
PA RNAMS BSTAN, DAL BA NI MI KHOM PA BRGYAD DANG BRAL ZHING
CHOS BYED PA LA KHOM PA DANG , 'BYOR PA NI RANG MIR SKYES

SHING SANGS RGYAS KYI BSTAN PA'I SGOR ZHUGS PA SOGS CHOS
SGRUB PA'I PHYI NANG GI MTHUN RKYEN RANG LA TSANG BA'AM
LDAN PA,

Now a single expression in the root verse, the one that reads "Leisure and fortune are hard to find," serves to introduce three different concepts: recognizing one's leisure and fortune, contemplating their incredible value, and contemplating how hard they are to find. What we mean by "leisure" is to be free of the eight different ways a person can lack opportunity, and to the opportunity to attempt some spiritual practice.[104] "Fortune" refers to the fact that one is fortunate enough to possess all the inner and outer circumstances that will allow him to undertake his practice. These include having taken birth as a human being, having entered the Buddha's teaching, and so on.¹⁰⁵

LUS RTEN 'DIR PHYI MA'I DON SGRUB PA NAS SANGS RGYAS KYI GO
'PHANG SGRUB PA MAN CHAD RANG LAG NA YOD PAS DON CHE BA,
RNYED DKA' BA LA GSUM LAS

This body we live in gives us in our own two hands the ability to achieve everything from good things in our next life on up to the state of Buddhahood itself, and thus is incredibly valuable. Such a body and life are difficult to find, from three different points of view.

RGYU'I SGO NAS DAL 'BYOR THOB PA'I RGYU TSUL KHRIMS RNAM PAR
DAG PA BSRUNG BA SOGS DKON PAS 'BRAS BU DAL 'BYOR GYI RTEN
RNYED DKA', NGO BO'I SGO NAS SPYIR NGAN 'GRO LAS BDE 'GRO
NYUNG , 'GRO BA GZHAN LAS MI NYUNG , MI'I NANG NAS 'DZAM BU'I
GLING PA NYUNG , 'DZAM BU GLING PA'I NANG NAS KYANG DAL
'BYOR THOB PA SHIN TU NYUNG BAS RNYED DKA',

We can start with the "causal" viewpoint. This life of leisure and fortune is hard to find because it is a specific result of the special causes that can bring one leisure and fortune, and these causes are extremely rare—keeping your moral life completely pure, and so on. Then there is the viewpoint of the "nature of the thing." Generally speaking, there are fewer beings in the happier realms than there are in the realms of misery.[106] Of all those in the happier realms, humans are the fewest. Of all the different human beings, those who live in the world we know are the fewest. And of all the humans in our world, those who've attained leisure and fortune are very, very few. Thus this life's by nature hard to find.

DPE'I SGO NAS GSER GYI GNYA' SHING BU GA GCIG PA ZHIG RGYA
MTSO CHEN PO'I KHAR RGYA MTSO'I RLABS KYIS PHYOGS KUN TU
KHYER BA LA, RUS SBAL LONG BA GCIG RGYA MTSO'I GTING DU GNAS
PA LO BRGYA RE'I MTSAMS NAS RGYA MTSO'I KHAR MGO RDOG TZAM
DU LAN RE 'ONG BA'I MGRIN PA GNYA' SHING GI BU GA DANG 'PHRAD
PA SRID MTHA' TZAM YIN PA

Finally a life like ours is hard to find from the viewpoint of the "classical example." Suppose there were a single yoke-like ring of pure gold that could float upon the surface of the great ocean. The swells of the sea push it back and forth, in every direction you can imagine. Far down in the very depths of the ocean lives a great sea-turtle. He is sightless. Once, and only once, in the span of an entire century he swims to the surface, to poke his head up momentarily. And suppose the golden ring happens to catch him around the neck. The odds against it are nearly infinite.

BZHIN DU SANGS RGYAS KYI BSTAN PA 'JIG RTEN GYI KHAM GZHAN
DANG GZHAN DU RES KYIS DAR BA LA, RANG MA RIG PAS MIG LDONG
STE 'KHOR BA'I RGYA MTSO'I GTING DU GTAN SDOD BYAS KYANG DA
RES DAL 'BYOR GYI MI LUS THOB PA NI CHES RNYED PAR DKA' BA SRID
MTHA' TZAM ZHIG RNYED PA YIN,

Our case is the same. The teachings of the Buddha pass now and again among the various planets of the universe. Here are we, blinded by our ignorance. We are permanent inhabitants of the deepest reaches within the ocean of cyclic life. A human body, complete with leisure and fortune, will be fantastically hard to find; the odds against it are almost infinite. But this time we have found one.

DE LTAR DAL 'BYOR DON CHE ZHING RNYED PAR DKA' BA LAN CIG
TZAM RNYED PA'I SKABS 'DIR SNYING PO KHYAD PAR CAN ZHIG NGES
PAR LEN DGOS PAS DE NI THEG PA CHEN PO'I CHOS NYAMS SU LEN PA
KHO NA YIN,

So our life of leisure and fortune is incredibly valuable, and difficult to find; this is the first and last time we will ever have such a chance. We must now make the greatest use we can of it. The single highest thing we can do with this life is to practice the Greater Way.

DE YANG DA LTA NYID NAS MA BLANGS NA RING POR MI THOGS PAR
'CHI BA MI RTAG PA 'ONG , 'CHI BA DRAN PA'I BLO DE YANG RANG GAR

'CHI BA 'ONG LUGS SHES PA TZAM DANG BSAM PA TZAM GYIS 'CHI BA GSHA' MA DRAN PA ZHIG 'ONG DKA' BAS BLO ZHIB TU SBYONG BA DGOS,

And we must begin this practice now, right now. Little time remains before the inevitable death comes to us. We must constantly bring our death to mind; just some vague awareness that someday death will come, or thinking some about death, is not enough to really keep your coming death in mind. You must train yourself, meticulously, in what it is to die.

GZHUNG 'DIR YANG TSE LA LONG MED CES PAS 'CHI BA DRAN TSUL BSTAN PA YIN, DE LA 'CHI BA DRAN PA'I PHAN YON, MA DRAN PA'I NYES DMIGS, 'CHI BA DRAN TSUL DNGOS KYI RTZA BA GSUM DANG , RGYU MTSAN DGU, THAG BCAD PA GSUM, 'CHI BA'I RNAM PA BSGOM PA RNAMS YUN BSRING STE SBYANG NA 'CHI BA DRAN PA'I BLO RNAL MA SKYES TE TSE 'DI'I SNANG SHAS LDOG PA ZHIG 'BYUNG , 'CHI BA MI RTAG PA DRAN PA'I BSAM BYUNG GI BLO NAM RGYUD LA SKYES PA NA CHOS DGE SBYOR GYI RKANG TSUGS ZHES PA DE BYUNG BA YIN,

In our root text, the instruction on how to keep your mind on death is presented in the words "life's not long." This instruction includes a number of categories: the benefits that come from keeping your mind on death, the problems that come from not keeping your mind on death, and how then actually to keep your mind on death. This last category itself includes the three basic principles, the nine reasons for them, and the three resolves to be made because of them—all ending with the meditation on what it's like to die.[107] A person who trains himself in these categories over a long period of time is able to develop the true attitude of keeping his mind on death, and then gains the ability to turn back his desire for the pleasures of the present life. When a person through the process of careful contemplation has developed this attitude of keeping his mind on his own death and impermanence, then we can say the virtuous way has taken its root within him.

'CHI BA SGOM TSUL DANG , 'OG NAS 'BYUNG BA'I SKYABS 'GRO LAS 'BRAS LA SOGS PA'I RNAM GZHAG RGYAS PA NI BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA'I KHRID LAS BYUNG BA LTAR SHES DGOS, GZHUNG 'DIR NGAN SONG GI SDUG BSNGAL BSAM PA DANG , SKYABS 'GRO'I CHOS SKOR RNAMS TSIG ZIN LA DNGOS SU MA GSUNGS KYANG , SHUGS LA BSTAN PA YIN GSUNGS,

At this point one should study the more detailed presentation of death meditation that appears in the standard works on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood. This applies as well to other topics following, such as how to go for refuge, and the teaching on actions and their consequences. Here in this text, concluded our Lama, the traditional contemplations on the sufferings of the lower births and the entire set of instructions about going for refuge are conveyed by implication, though not directly in the actual words of the verses.

Notes to Reading Five

[79.] *We call someone...* From a classic text on the teachings of emptiness by Master Aryadeva (c. 200 A.D.). Quotation from f. 13a, entry 40.

[80.] *six images for the instruction:* For these and the three "problems of the pot," see note 16.

[81.] *the first one of these verses:* The greater "Steps on the Path" treats the eminence of the author on folios 3a-8a, and the eminence of the teaching on folios 8a-14b. Advice on how to teach and learn the steps is found on folios 14b-22a. The actual instructions on how to lead students along the Steps of the path comprise folios 22a-523a. These four basic sections are found in the middle-length version of the "Steps on the Path" at folios 2a-5b; folios 5b-8b; folios 8b-13b; and folios 13b-201b. Both works are by Lord Tsongkapa (see entries 61 and 60, respectively).

[82.] *normal suffering being:* Our being consists of our physical form, our feelings, our ability to discriminate, our remaining mental functions and various other parts, and our consciousness. These are known as the "heaps," or groups of things that make us up, since each of the five divisions involves numerous members piled together. They are "impure" basically because they are products of and also promote bad thoughts and ignorant actions.

[83.] *lower nirvana:* Nirvana, or the permanent end of all one's mental afflictions, is equivalent to Buddhahood if one attains it with the wish to liberate all beings. Nirvana without this wish is a "lower nirvana."

[84.] *About this attitude...* Quotation found on ff. 168a-168b of Lord Tsongkapa's *Greater Steps on the Path* (entry 61). Sharawa (1070-1141) was one of the pillars of the early Seer tradition of Tibetan Buddhist masters; he was a student of the great Potowa and a teacher of the illustrious Chekapa.

[85.] *Only in Tibet...* Original source not found. The quotation also appears in the greater work on the Steps by Lord Tsongkapa (f. 206b, entry 61).

[86.] *No practitioner, a person who loves this life...* Quotation from p. 436 of this classic "mental training" text of the venerable Drakpa Gyeltsen (entry 12, see also note 53). The "four loves" are listed this way:

Love for this life, which makes one

no practitioner.

Love for this world, which is no
renunciation.

Love for one's selfish interests, which
makes one no bodhisattva.

Grasping to a real "me," which is no
correct view.

[87.] *repeated three times, and loud:* A full account of the incident is found in the *Collected Sayings of the Seers*, compiled by Tsunpa Chegom; see f. 21, entry 18. For information on Lord Drom Tonpa, see note 49.

[88.] *Shang Nachung Tonpa:* The incident with Lord Atisha is related by Lord Tsongkapa in his *Greater Steps on the Path* (f. 192a, entry 61); similar exchanges appear in Pabongka Rinpoche's *Liberation* (ff. 169a and 294a, entry 47) and in the *Collected Sayings of the Seers* (f. 5b, entry 18). We read in the *Blue Annals* that this student was himself a master of the teachings of Loving One, the Future Buddha, and imparted them to Monton Jung-ne Sherab, a nephew of the renowned translator Ma Lotsawa (pp. 232-3, entry 94).

[89.] *They go into seclusion...* Source of this and the following quotation not found. Both appear in Pabongka Rinpoche's *Liberation in Our Hands* (f. 171a, entry 47). "Droway Gonpo" is a name applied to a number of Tibetan sages; Pabongka Rinpoche adds the word "Gyer" before the name in one instance, but it is still not clear to whom the quotations are to be attributed.

[90.] *All the spiritual practice...* Original source of quotation not found. Ngari Panchen, full name Padma Wangyal (1487-1543), was a sage of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

[91.] *Oh worldly wise!* From the famed epistle of spiritual instruction sent by the great Buddhist philosopher Master Nagarjuna (c. 200 A.D.) to the Indian king Udayibhadra (f. 42a, entry 6; for English translation see p. 68, entry 95).

[92.] *In the city of daily concerns...* Original source of quotation not found; the lines appear as well in Pabongka Rinpoche's work on the Steps (f. 169b, entry 47). It is a practice for Buddhist meditators to go to some frightening place, like a

cemetery or a high cliff, to observe their heightened sense of a "self" and better understand it. Graveyards in Tibet and India were especially fear-inspiring because bodies were simply laid out rather than buried, and this would attract dangerous wild animals. The great Lingrepa, full name Padma Dorje (1128-1188), was a student of Droway Gonpo Pakmo Drupa and founded one of the orders of the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

[93.] *It doesn't do any good...* The quotation is found, fittingly, in his treatise on the secret practice of "great completion" (p. 221, entry 76). Yang Gonpa, full name Gyal Tsen Pel (1213-1258) and his teacher Gu-tsangpa Gonpo Dorje (1189-1258) were also founding fathers of one of the orders of the Kagyu tradition.

[94.] *ten "ultimate riches":* We see the roots of these ten riches in the instructions of Geshe Shawopa among the *Collected Sayings of the Seers* (ff. 47b-48b, entry 18).

[95.] *And in the days when my teaching...* The Buddha's eloquent oath appears on f. 414, entry 28. The "saffron robe" is that of a Buddhist monk.

[96.] *In future days...* Source of this and following quotation not located.

[97.] *Gyalchok Kelsang Gyatso (1708-1757) and Panchen Lobsang Yeshe (1663-1737):* The former was the seventh of the Dalai Lamas, spiritual and temporal rulers of Tibet. He built the Norbulingka, magnificent summer palace of the Dalai Lamas, and sponsored a carving of the wooden printing-blocks for the entire collection of over 4,000 titles in the Tibetan Buddhist canon. The latter figure was the second of the Panchen Lamas, another exalted lineage of spiritual and temporal leaders centered at the great Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in south-central Tibet. He was an eminent practitioner and scholar of Buddhism while still one of the most powerful political figures of his time.

[98.] *relinquished their thrones and left the home:* The Buddha himself turned down the opportunity to become a World Emperor, and was originally Prince Siddhartha, son of King Suddhodana and Queen Maya of the vast Shakya empire of north India. Master Shantideva, the great 8th Century Buddhist philosopher and poet, was born son of the king of Saurashtra, in what is now Gujarat (north of Bombay). Lord Atisha was the son of King Kalyanashri and Queen Prabhavati, rulers of the 10th Century Sahor kingdom of Bengal, around Calcutta; their might was said to equal that of the Emperor of China.

[99.] *the emperor of China:* The incident occurred in 1408, and the emissaries were

dispatched by Yung Lo, the third emperor of the Ming Dynasty. In his stead, Lord Tsongkapa sent Jamchen Chuje Shakya Yeshe, who later went on to found the great Sera Monastery, where Pabongka Rinpoche was himself trained nearly 500 years later. The "Purest Eight" who followed the Master into retreat were Jamkarwa Jampel Chusang, Neten Sang-kyongwa, Neten Rinchen Gyeltsen, Neten Jangsengpa, Lama Jampel Gyatso, Geshe Sherab Drak, Geshe Jampel Tashi, and Geshe Pelkyong.

[100.] *Milarepa, of days gone by...* The great Wensapa (1505- 1566) was the learned teacher of Kedrup Sangye Yeshe, who was in turn the teacher of the first Panchen Lama. The "Lobsang Dundrup" of the verse is Wensapa himself, for this was his ordination name. His glowing reference to his own attainments seems presumptuous until we realize that he is referring only to what he hopes he can be, for the verse is found in a section of his writings entitled "Advices to Myself" (see f. 26B, entry 53).

[101.] *If in your heart...* The quoted lines appear on p. 163 of the famous biography of Lord Milarepa by his disciple Rechung Dorje Drakpa (1083-1161); see entry 36.

[102.] *No way my loved ones know...* The lines are found in the section about Lord Milarepa (ff. 72-100) from the *Ocean of Songs of the Kagyu* by Karmapa Mikyu Dorje (1507-1554); see entry 58.

[103.] *This body of leisure...* Another quotation from the very brief version of Lord Tsongkapa's *Steps on the Path to Buddhahood*; see f. 56a, entry 63.

[104.] *eight ways of lacking opportunity:* These are to hold wrong views, such as believing that what you do does not come back to you; to be born as an animal; birth as an insatiable spirit; birth in the hells; birth in a land where the Buddha's teachings are not available; birth in an "uncivilized" land, where no one keeps the vows of morality; birth as a human who is retarded or otherwise handicapped, and so cannot practice the teachings; and birth as a long-lived being of pleasure in one of the temporary paradises (Lord Tsongkapa, pp. 135-7, entry 61; Pabongka Rinpoche, ff. 154b-156b, entry 47; and Master Nagarjuna, pp. 95-6 of the English translation, entry 95).

[105.] *"Fortune":* The "fortunes" we have are divided into two groups of five: those that relate to ourselves—personal qualities—and those that relate to "others," or the outside world. The first five are to be born as a human; to be born in a "central" land, where people keep the traditional vows of morality; to be

born with all one's faculties intact; not to have committed heinous misdeeds, such as killing one's parents; and to have faith in the teachings. The second five are to live in a world where a Buddha has come; where his teachings have been spoken; where the teachings spoken have not been lost; where people still practice them; and where practitioners enjoy the kind support they require (Lord Tsongkapa, entry 61, pp. 137-8; Pabongka Rinpoche, entry 47, ff. 156b-158a).

[106.] *happier realms*: These consist of the beings who live as humans, as full pleasure beings in the temporary paradises, and as lesser pleasure beings.

[107.] *benefits that come from keeping your mind on death, etc.*: In his masterwork *Liberation in Our Hands*, Pabongka Rinpoche lists six benefits of keeping your mind on death: your practice becomes really pure; it gains power; the thoughts help you start practice; they help you strive hard during your practice; they help bring your practice to a successful conclusion; and in the hour of death you go with satisfaction, for you know you have spent your life meaningfully.

The Rinpoche also lists six problems that come from not keeping your mind on death: you neglect your religious life, and spend all your days in thoughts of what to eat or wear—this life's distractions; you consider death occasionally but always think it will come later, and delay your practice; or you do practice, but for the wrong reason—with hopes of reputation; you practice but with no enthusiasm, and drop it after a while; you get deeper into this life, your attitude gets worse, and life begins to hurt you; and at death you naturally feel intense regret, for you have wasted all your efforts on this present life.

The three principles, for how actually to keep your mind on death, have three reasons each, making a total of nine. First of all, death is certain: no power in the universe can stop death when it arrives; there is no way to add time to your life, you come closer to death every minute; even while you are alive, the free time available for your practice is extremely limited before you have to die.

The second principle is that there is absolutely no certainty when you will die. We are in a time and realm where the length of life is uncertain; we can be sure we will never have enough time to defeat all our enemies, raise up all our friends, and still complete our religious practice before we die. The things that can kill us are many; the things that keep us alive are few. And in general the body we have is fragile, weak: a small splinter in the hand can give us an infection that kills us—we are like bubbles, like candles in a windstorm.

The third principle is that, at the moment of death, nothing at all can help us but our spiritual practice. None of your money or things can help you. None of your friends or family can help you—they can be holding you tightly by the arms and legs, but still you will slip away alone. And not even your own body can help you—you have to give up your most cherished possession, your beloved body, along with everything else.

The three principles call for three resolves on our part. Knowing that we shall have to die, we must resolve to begin our practice. Knowing that we could die any time, we must quit our worldly work immediately and start our practice today. And finally, since nothing else can help us, we must devote ourselves to our practice only. A man who is hiking many miles doesn't fill up his pack with a lot of crap that he won't be needing.

The above points are paraphrased from the works on the Steps of the path by Lord Tsongkapa (entry 61, ff. 65-75) and Pabongka Rinpoche (entry 47, ff. 168-182). For the last point mentioned in the text, the meditation on what it's like to die, we quote the Rinpoche directly (ff. 182b-183a):

They try all different kinds of treatments and holy rituals but your condition gets worse and worse. The doctors start lying to you. Your friends and relatives say all sorts of cheery things to your face, but behind your back they start wrapping up your affairs, because everyone can see you're going to die.

Your body starts to lose its familiar warmth. It's hard to breathe. The nostrils collapse. The lips curl back. The color starts to drain from your face. All sorts of repulsive signs begin to show, inside and outside of you.

You think of all the wrong things you did in your life, and wish so badly you had never done them. You can't quite be sure if you ever really got rid of them all when you confessed; or that you really did any true good deed.

Then comes the final pain, the unspeakable searing pain that comes with death. The basic building blocks of your body begin their domino collapse, you are blinded by catastrophic images, hallucinations of pure terror crowd into your mind, and carry you away, and the whole world you have been living blinks out.

People take your corpse and wrap it up in a sheet and lay it in some corner. They hang up a curtain to hide it. Somebody lights up a smudgy little candle and leaves it there. If you're one of those reincarnated lamas, they dress you up in you fancy ritual robes and try to make you look good.

Right now we are all running around trying to arrange ourselves a nice house, soft clothes, cozy chairs. But you know the custom here in Tibet—when you die they'll tie your arms and legs up against your chest with a leather strap, carry the body far from town, and throw it naked out on the rocks.

Right now we all go home and try to cook ourselves up some delectable dish—but there will come a day when you stand there praying for a little taste of those cakes they offer the spirits of the dead. Right now we have the big name—they call us Doctor Professor, or Respected Sir, or Your Reverence. But there will come a day when they look at your body and call you nothing but "that stinking corpse." There will come a day when the title they put in front of your name is "the late," or "that guy they used to call..."

So now when you respected lamas out there in the audience look at your ritual robes, let it come into your thoughts that these are the robes they will dress your remains in after you have expired. And all the rest of us, when we look at our bedsheets before we go to sleep, should try to remember that these are what they will wrap our stinking corpse in when we die. As Milarepa said,

That frightful corpse they talk about
Is the very body you wear, meditator.

He means look at your own body now, and always see the future corpse.

The Key that Unlocks the Door to the Noble Path (Lam bzang sgo 'byed) written by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-91), a commentary upon the *Three Principal Paths (Lam-gtzo rnam-gsum)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), folios 18b-22b.

IX. Stopping Desire for Future Lives

GNYIS PA PHYI MA'I SNANG SHAS LDOG TSUL NI,

This brings us to the teaching on how to stop desire for one's future lives, which is the second step in developing the path known as renunciation.

LAS 'BRAS MI BSLU 'KHOR BA'I SDUG BSNAL RNAMS,
,YANG YANG BSAMS PAS PHYI MA'I SNANG SHAS LDOG
,CES PAS BSTAN TE,

(4b)

**Think over and over how deeds and their fruits
never fail,
And the cycle's suffering: stop desire
for the future.**

RANG PHYI MAR TSANGS PA BRGYA BYIN DANG 'KHOR SGYUR LTA BU'I
LUS LONGS SPYOD SOGS GNAS DANG YO BYAD PHUN SUM TSOGS PA'I
BDE SKYID BZANG PO ZHIG BYUNG NA SNYAM PA NI PHYI MA'I SNANG
SHAS YIN, KUN SLONG SEMS CAN GYI DON BYA RGYU'I BSAM BLO MED
PAR, DAG ZHING DU SKYES NA SDUG BSNAL MI MYONG BAS RANG
SKYID PA 'ONG SNYAM PA TSO YANG PHAR DED NA PHAL CHER PHYI
MA'I SNANG SHAS KYI DBANG DU 'GRO TSOD SNANG ,

Now what we mean by "desire for the future" is the kind of attitude where you think to yourself, "I hope in my future births I can live like some god-like being, such as the creatures they call Pure-One and Hundred-Gift, or like one of those Wheel Emperors who rule the entire world. May I live in some wonderful state of happiness, in the best of places, with the best of things, with a beautiful body and everything I wish for at my fingertips." Incidentally, we also see people who pray to be born in one of the truly pure realms of a Buddha, where they will never have to suffer and can enjoy everlasting happiness—but they pray so without any intention of reaching this high state in order to help other beings. If we really follow this line of thinking to its end, it would appear that people like

this have for the most part simply slipped into the base desire for future lives.

LAM RIM DU SKYES BU CHUNG NGU'I LAS 'BRAS KYIS TSE 'DI DANG ,
'BRING GIS PHYI MA'I SNANG SHAS LDOG TSUL GSUNGS KYANG , LAM
GTZO 'DIR DAL 'BYOR DANG MI RTAG PAS TSE 'DI DANG , LAS 'BRAS
DANG 'KHOR BA'I SDUG BSNGAL BSAM PA GNYIS ZUNG 'BREL GYIS PHYI
MA'I SNANG SHAS LDOG THABS SU GSUNGS PA'I

In standard texts on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood, we are taught the principles of actions and their consequences in the section for people whose practice is of a lesser scope, in order to stop our desire for this present life. The instructions for people of a medium scope then are meant to help us stop our desire for a future life. Here in the teaching on the three principal paths though we are advised to meditate on our leisure and fortune, as well as impermanence, in order to stop our desire for this life; our desire for future lives is to be stopped by a combination of understanding the principles of actions and their consequences and contemplating the various sufferings of cyclic life.

GNAD GCIG NI LAS 'BRAS PHRA ZHING PHRA BA YIN PAS 'KHOR BA
LAS GTAN NAS MA THAR NA SLAR YANG SDIG PA'I 'BRAS BUS 'KHOR
BAR 'KHOR BAS DANG , GCIG NI 'KHOR BA LAS LDOG PA LA MA RIG PAS
KUN NAS BSLANGS PA'I LAS KYI RIGS MTHA' DAG LDOG DGOS PAS DE'I
DON DU MDZAD PA YIN,

This latter way of making the presentation is meant to convey two important points. The first is that, since the forces of action and consequence are so extremely subtle, the consequences of any misdeed will wheel one back into the circle of life if one fails to make a complete escape from the cycle first. The second is that, in order to defeat this circle, one must stop each and every action he performs which is motivated by ignorance.

DES NA 'KHOR BA LAS THAR BA LA DKAR NAG GI LAS 'BRAS LA BLANG
DOR DGOS, DE LA DANG POR LAS 'BRAS LA YID CHES DGOS, DE LA LAS
'BRAS BSAM DGOS,

Thus we can say that, in order to escape the circle of life, one must take up white actions and abandon black actions. But to do this, he must believe in the law of actions and consequences at all. And to do this, he must contemplate upon actions and consequences.

BSAM TSUL YANG SANGS RGYAS KYIS LAS NGES PA'I TSUL, LAS 'PHEL
CHE BA, LAS MA BYAS PA DANG MI 'PHRAD PA, BYAS PA CHUD MI ZA
BA STE LAS KYI TSUL BZHI'I SGO NAS GSUNGS PA RNAMS ZHIB TU BSAM
NA LAS 'BRAS LA YID CHES KYI DAD PA SKYES TE BLANG DOR LAG LEN
BYED PA RANG SHUGS KYIS 'ONG BA YIN,

This contemplation is done by considering, very carefully, the four principles of action which the Buddha enunciated:

- 1) Actions are certain to produce similar consequences.
- 2) The consequences are greater than the actions.
- 3) One cannot meet a consequence if he has not committed an action.
- 4) Once an action is committed, the consequence cannot be lost.

Once a person has gained a well-founded belief in these principles, he will automatically in his daily life avoid doing wrong things and begin doing right things.

LAM RIM DU MI RTAG PA'I RJES SU NGAN SONG GSUM DANG SKYABS
'GRO'I SKOR GSUNGS SHING , GZHUNG 'DI'I YANG DGONGS PA LTAR DA
RES LAM RIM NAS KHA BSKANG STE CUNG ZAD ZHU NA,

In texts on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood, the instruction on impermanence is followed by sections that treat the three lower births and how to go for refuge. Here we will weave in some of these points from the Steps—which is also the intent of the text at hand.

'CHI BA'I 'OG TU RNAM SHES MAR ME SHI BA LTAR MED DE MI 'GRO BAR
SKYE BA ZHIG LEN DGOS, SKYE SA DE YANG NGAN 'GRO DANG BDE
'GRO GNYIS YIN, DE GNYIS GANG DU SKYE RANG LA RANG DBANG MED
PAR LAS KYI RJES SU 'GRO DGOS PAS DGE BAS BDE 'GRO DANG MI DGE
BAS NGAN 'GROR 'PHEN,

After you die, your consciousness doesn't just go out like a lamp—you must take another birth. And there are only two kinds of birth you can take: one of the

births of misery, or one of the happier births. As for which of the two you do take, you are totally helpless: you must follow the direction of your past actions. Virtuous actions throw you into one of the happier types of birth, and non-virtuous actions throw you into one of the three of misery.

DE YANG LAS MI DGE BA CHEN POS DMYAL BA, 'BRING GIS YI DVAGS,
CHUNG NGUS DUD 'GROR SKYE, LAS DGE BA CHEN POS KHAMs GONG
MA GNYIS KYI LHA, 'BRING GIS 'DOD PA'I LHA, CHUNG NGUS 'DOD
KHAMs KYI MIR SKYE BA YIN, DE LTAR YANG DPAL MGON KLU SGRUB
KYIS,

Great non-virtuous acts lead you to the hells; medium ones lead you to a birth as an insatiable spirit; and lesser non-virtues make you take birth as an animal. Great virtuous acts, on the other hand, bring you a birth as a pleasure-being in one of the two higher realms; medium virtues make you a pleasure being of the desire realm; and lesser virtues bring birth as a human in the same realm.[108] As our glorious protector, Nagarjuna, has stated,

,MI DGE BA LAS SDUG BSNGAL KUN,
,DE BZHIN NGAN 'GRO THAMs DO,
,DGE LAS BDE 'GRO THAMs CAD DANG ,
,SKYE BA KUN TU BDE BA DAG
,CES GSUNGS,

Non-virtue brings all sufferings
And all the births of misery.
Virtue brings all happier births,
And happiness in all one's births.[109]

DE LTAR NA RANG RE LA DGE BA NI STOBs CHUNG ZHING MI DGE BA
NI SHIN TU STOBs CHE BAS 'DI GA'I NGANG NAS 'CHI NA NI PHYI MAR
NGAN 'GROR SKYE BA THAG CHOD,

Since this is the case, and since all the virtues you and I have are feeble—while all our non-virtues are ever so mighty—then if we were to die in our present condition it's a foregone conclusion that we would take birth in one of the realms of misery.

NGAN SONG DU SKYES TSE DMYAL BA PA LA TSA GRANG BTZO BSREG
LA SOGS PA DANG , YI DVAGS LA BKRES SKOM NGAL 'JIGs LA SOGS PA

DANG , DUD 'GRO LA GLEN ZHING GTI MUG PA DANG , BKOL SPYOD LA
SOGS PA'I SDUG BSNGAL BZOD GLAGS MED,

Taking our birth in one of these realms, we would meet unbearable sufferings. As a hellbeing there would be unspeakable heat or cold, our bodies boiled or scorched, and more. As insatiable spirits we would always be hungry, or thirsty, in a constant state of exhaustion and fear. As animals we would be mindless brutes incapable of saying a thing, exploited by humans for their work or food.

DE LTA BU'I NGAN SONG DU MI 'GRO BA'I THABS SU DKON MCHO
G SUM LA SNYING NAS SKYABS BCOL, LAS 'BRAS KYI BLANG DOR LA
TSUL BZHIN DU 'BAD DGOS,

There is a way to avoid these births of misery, and this is to turn ourselves over to the three rare jewels[110] for their protection, and do so from the bottom of our hearts, and strive our best in choosing correctly which actions we should undertake, and which we should abandon.

SKYABS 'GRO'I BSLAB BYA'I GTZO BO YANG LAS 'BRAS LA BLANG DOR
BYED PA 'DI YIN, LAS 'BRAS 'DI MA BSRUNGS NA NGAN 'GROR SKYE BA
THAG CHOD CHOD PA RED, DE YANG RANG CAG PHAL CHE BA 'DI
CHOS RANG GIS MA SHES PA GCIG PUS NGAN SONG DU SONG BA MIN
YANG , CHOS SHES KYANG LAG TU MA BLANGS PA DANG , LAS 'BRAS
KHYAD DU BSAD PAS NGAN SONG DU 'GRO BA CHES MANG BA YIN,

This correct decision in choosing our actions is actually the single most important instruction in the entire teaching on how to go for refuge. Once we disregard the principles of action and consequence, it's already decided that we will take our birth in the realms of misery. People like you and I here in this assembly, mostly monks, are not likely to take one of these lower births simply because we know nothing of the spiritual teachings. But remember: there have been absolute multitudes of people like us, who had a knowledge of the teachings, but who passed to the realms of misery because they could not put these teachings into actual practice, or because they chose to disregard the laws of action and consequence.

LAS 'BRAS KHYAD DU BSAD NA MKHAS PA DANG BTZUN PA JI 'DRA
ZHIG YIN KYANG NGAN SONG DU 'GRO, LAS 'BRAS 'DI LA NAN TAN MA
BYAS NA, MKHAS PA SDE SNOD 'DZIN PA DANG , GRUB PA THOB PA'I
RNAL 'BYOR PA DANG , MNGON SHES DANG RDZU 'PHRUL LA MNGA'

BRNYES PA YIN KYANG SDUG BSNGAL MYONG DGOS PA,

And we must heed these laws. A man who does not must take a lower birth, and it doesn't matter how knowledgeable he was, or how saintly. You can be a sage who has mastered the entire contents of the canon, you can be an advanced meditator with fantastic spiritual accomplishments, you can have great extrasensory powers, and ability to perform miracles; but if you cannot behave with care around action and consequence, you will suffer.

DPER NA DGE SLONG LEGS SKAR GYI BLOR SDE SNOD BCU GNYIS DANG
, LHAS BYIN GYI BLOR CHOS PHUNG GCIG YOD PAS KYANG MA PHAN
PAR DMYAL BAR SKYES PA DE CHOS SHES KYANG NYAMS SU MA
BLANGS PA DANG , LAS 'BRAS KHYAD DU BSAD PA DANG , LAS 'BRAS LA
DAD PA MA SKYES PA LAS BYUNG BA DANG 'DRA STE DE LTA BU'I
SNGON BYUNG GI LO RGYUS CHES MANG DU YOD PA LAS SHES,

We have for example the monk named Lekkar, who could sit and recite all twelve of the great collections of scripture,[111] as well as Devadatta—who had in his memory no less than that vast amount of scriptures we call a "heap." [112] And yet ultimately it was no use to either one, for they took their rebirth in the hells. This again would seem to be a case where the person had a knowledge of the teachings, but was unable to put them into actual practice, or disregarded the principles of actions and their consequences, or never gained any belief in these principles in the first place. Accounts like these of people who lived before us and made the same mistake are almost countless—and we should learn from them.

DES NA 'DIR LAS 'BRAS SPYIR BSAM PA LA BZHI LAS, RGYU DGE BA BYAS
PA'I 'BRAS BU BDE BA KHO NA LAS SDUG BSNGAL MI 'BYUNG , RGYU MI
DGE BA BYAS PA'I 'BRAS BU SDUG BSNGAL KHO NA LAS BDE BA MI
'BYUNG BAS LAS NGES PA'I TSUL,

So this brings us to the four most general principles in our contemplation of actions and their consequences:

- 1) If the cause involved is a virtuous act, then the consequence it produces can only be pleasure, and never pain. If the cause involved is a non-virtuous act, then the consequence it produces can only be pain, and never pleasure. Thus the first principle is that *actions are certain to produce similar consequences.*

RGYU DGE SDIG GNYIS CHUNG NGU RE LAS MA BYAS KYANG , 'BRAS BU BDE SDUG GNYIS KA SHIN TU STOBS CHEN PO 'BYUNG BAS LAS 'PHEL CHE BA,

2) The causes involved may be virtuous or non-virtuous acts which are relatively minor, but the consequences they each produce—the pleasure or the pain—will be of tremendous power. The second principle then is that *the consequences are greater than the actions*.

RGYU DGE SDIG GNYIS MA BYAS NA, 'BRAS BU BDE SDUG GANG YANG MI MYONG BAS LAS MA BYAS PA DANG MI 'PHRAD PA,

3) If one never performs the virtuous or non-virtuous action to act as a cause, he will never experience a consequence of either pleasure or pain. Thus the third principle: *One cannot meet a consequence if he has not committed an action*.

RGYU DGE SDIG GNYIS BSAGS PA DE DGE BA KHONG KHRO SOGS KYIS MA BCOM ZHING , SDIG PA GNYEN POS MA BCOM NA LAS BYAS PA CHUD MI ZA BA YIN,

4) The fourth principle states that once a person has collected a virtuous or non-virtuous action to act as a cause, *once an action is committed, the consequence cannot be lost*—so long as the power of a good deed, for example, is not destroyed by an emotion like anger, or a bad deed by applying an appropriate antidote.[113]

DE YANG DGE SDIG GNYIS KA ZHING GI SGO NAS STOBS CHE BA DANG , DE BZHIN DU BSAM PA DANG , DNGOS PO DANG , RTEN GYI SGO NAS STOBS CHE BAR GSUNGS PA

There are other principles as well; it is said that whether the action is virtuous or non-virtuous, its power is multiplied if one performs it towards some especially important object. The same thing happens if the thought behind the action is particularly strong, or if the material with which one performs the deed is somehow special, or even if the person performing the deed is someone special.

RNAMS LA YID CHES KYI DAD PA BRTAN PO SKYED DE, LAS 'BRAS PHRA ZHING ZAB PA'I TSUL RNAMS ZHIB TU BSAMS NAS LAG LEN BYED, LAG TU LEN PA NA BSRUNG SA NI MI DGE BCU SPONG GI STENG

NAS BSRUNG DGOS,

You must try to gain some well-founded belief in these principles. Take time to contemplate even the most deep and subtle workings of actions and their consequences, and then put this understanding into actual practice. Putting the laws of action and consequence into practice means keeping them—and this means keeping the rules by avoiding the ten non-virtues.[114]

'JIG RTEN PA'I YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA ZHES PA'ANG 'DI YIN, 'DI SER
SKYA TSANG MAS NYAMS SU LEN DGOS TE, 'JIG RTEN PA ZHES PA DE
KHYIM PA SKYA BO GCIG PU LA GSUNGS PA MIN CING , 'PHAGS LAM
MA THOB BAR DU TSANG MA SO SO SKYE BO YIN PAS SO SKYE YIN NA
'JIG RTEN PA YIN PAS KHYAB,

You've heard of the correct view that we call the "worldly" one—well this understanding of actions and consequences is what it refers to. This view by the way is something that everyone should adhere to, regardless of whether they're a monk or nun or layman. You should realize that the word "worldly" in this case is not just meant to refer to people who are still living the secular life. There is an expression we use, "ordinary people," to refer to any person who has yet to reach the path of a realized being.[115] Whatever else we may be, we are "worldly" people so long as we are ordinary people in this sense.

DES NA CHOS LAG LEN LAS 'BRAS NAS BYA DGOS, DE YANG LAM GYI
'GO BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL, LAM RIM GYI 'GO DAL 'BYOR, SGOM GYI
'GO KUN SLONG , CHOS LAG LEN GYI 'GO LAS 'BRAS NAS TSUGS PA YIN
GSUNGS,

Putting religion into practice then must start from keeping the laws of actions and their consequences. It's been said that,

The path begins with proper reliance on
a spiritual guide.
The steps of the path begin with contemplating
your leisure and fortune.
Meditation begins with your motivation; and
Putting religion into practice begins with
observing the laws, of actions and
their consequences.[116]

DE'I PHYIR RANG GI SGO GSUM NYES PAS MA GOS PA BYED, BRGYA LA
GOS NA'ANG BSHAGS PAS 'DAG PAR BYED DGOS,

Therefore we must never allow our body or speech or mind—any of the three doors through which we express ourselves—to be tainted by misdeeds. And if by some chance we do, we must purify ourselves of the misdeed through the process of confession.

SPYIR LAS 'BRAS BSAMS PAS PHYI MA'I SNANG SHAS LDOG NUS KYANG ,
GTZO BO NI 'KHOR BA'I SDUG BSNGAL BSAM PA 'DI YIN, NGES 'BYUNG
NI SPYIR DMYAL BA YANG SOS PA'I SDUG BSNGAL BSGOMS NAS DE LA
YID SKRAG PA SKYES PA NA NGES 'BYUNG GI SNE DANG PO SKYE YANG
, NGES 'BYUNG GI RTZAL YONGS SU RDZOGS PA NI 'KHOR BA'I PHUN
TSOGS LA'ANG ZHEN PA LOG PA NA RDZOGS PA YIN,

Generally speaking, contemplation upon the principles of actions and their consequences is enough to stop desire for the future life. But really the main way is to contemplate the many sufferings of this cyclic life. In a broad sense, we can say that renunciation has just begun to sprout in a person's heart once he has meditated on the torments of "Revive" (the lightest hell) and feels a sense of terror.[117] But complete proficiency in renunciation comes only when one feels a total disgust even for the supposed good things of this revolving life.

'KHOR BA'I SDUG BSNGAL BSAM PA LA SPYIR BSAM PA DANG SO SOR
BSAM PA GNYIS LAS, 'JAM DPAL ZHAL LUNG LA SO SOR BSAM PA
SNGON DANG , SPYIR BSAM PA RJES SU GSUNGS SHING , BDE MYUR LA
SPYIR BSAM PA SNGON DANG , SO SOR BSAM PA RJES SU GSUNGS PA DE
RE RE LA'ANG GNAD RE YOD, DA LAM ZHAL LUNG LTAR ZHU NA,

The traditional contemplation of the sufferings of cyclic life has two parts: considering these sufferings in general, and thinking them over one by one. The text called *Word of the Gentle One* describes the individual sufferings first, and then goes on to the general ones.[118] The works known as *Path of Bliss* and *Quick Path*, on the other hand, present the general sufferings first and the individual sufferings later.[119] Each way of doing it conveys a very valuable lesson; here we will follow the *Word*.

SKYABS 'GRO DANG LAS 'BRAS KYI BLANG DOR LA 'BAD PAS NGAN
SONG LAS THAR YANG , 'KHOR BA 'DI LAS GTAN NAS THAR BA ZHIG
MA BYUNG NA NGAN SONG DU SKYES NA TA AA CANG STE BDE 'GRO'I

RTEN BZANG PO ZHIG THOB KYANG SDUG BSNGAL KHO NA LAS MA
'DAS TE,

Doing your best to follow the teaching on going for refuge, and to make the right decisions with regard to actions and their consequences, will free you from having to take one of the three lower births. But what you really need is to free yourself from the cycle of life altogether; for while you may have avoided a lower birth, achieving some wonderful life in one of the happier births is nothing but suffering anyway.

MI LA SKYES KYANG SKYE BA'I SDUG BSNGAL, RGA BA'I SDUG BSNGAL,
NA BA'I SDUG BSNGAL, 'CHI BA'I SDUG BSNGAL, GNYEN SDUG PA DANG
BRAL BA'I SDUG BSNGAL, DGRA MI SDUG PA DANG PHRAD PA'I SDUG
BSNGAL, 'DOD PA'I DNGOS PO BTZAL KYANG MI RNYED PA'I SDUG
BSNGAL SOGS DANG ,

Let's say you are born as a human; still you must suffer as you come from the womb. Still you must suffer as your body gets older, day by day. Still you must suffer when you are ill. Still you must suffer as you die. You must suffer the pain of missing your beloved family. You must suffer the pain of encountering your hated enemies. You must suffer the pain of working for the things you want, and not being able to get them—and on and on.

LHA MA YIN DU SKYES NA 'THAB RTZOD DANG , PHRAG DOG GIS YID
GDUNGS PA DANG , LUS BCAD PA DANG DRAL BA SOGS KYI SDUG
BSNGAL,

Suppose you take the second type of happier birth—in some kind of heavenly place, as one of the lesser beings of pleasure. Still in your life you suffer during the fighting,[120] and suffer from intense jealousy towards the higher pleasure-beings, and suffer as your body is sliced apart or ripped to pieces, and on and on.

LHAR SKYES KYANG 'DOD LHA LA SKYES NA, 'CHI LTAS PHOG PA DANG
GNAS 'OG MAR LTUNG BA LA SOGS PA'I SDUG BSNGAL CHE ZHING ,
LHA RNAMS KYANG PHAL CHER SHI NAS NGAN 'GROR 'GRO STE
SNGON DGE BA BSAGS PA'I LAS BZANG PO RNAMS NI LHA'I BDE SKYID
DES 'DZAD, RTEN DE LA DGE BA NI GSAR DU MI GSOG CING , MI DGE BA
NI CHAGS SOGS NYON MONGS PA STOB CHEN YOD PAS DES NGAN
SONG DU 'PHEN PA YIN,

Suppose finally that you become one of the higher pleasure-beings. They live in all three realms of existence; let's say you get to be a being of pleasure in the first of them—in the realm of desire. Still you go through terrible suffering as after an incredibly long and pleasure-filled life the signs of death begin to ruin your body, and then as you take your fall to a lower birth, and on and on—for the vast majority of pleasure-beings go straight to one of the lives of misery. All the stored-up positive power of the good deeds they did in their past lives is squandered as they enjoy its consequences—the delights of a pleasure-being's existence. During this existence they have no chance to store up any more of this positive power. Still though they possess great supplies of bad deeds--tremendous negative power in the form of mental afflictions like desire and attachment. These then hurl them into a rebirth of misery when they die.

KHAMS GONG MA'I L HAR SKYES NA SDUG BSN GAL MNGON 'GYUR BA
MED KYANG KHYAB PA 'DU BYED KYI SDUG BSN GAL GYI RANG BZHIN
CAN YIN PA DANG , GNAS PA LA RANG DBANG MED PAS NAM ZHIG
SNGAR GYI LAS BZANG PO'I 'PHEN PA DE ZAD, LAS NGAN PA ZHIG
DANG PHRAD NAS NGAN 'GROR 'GRO , DE LTAR NA 'KHOR BA'I PHUN
TSOGS JI LTAR BYUNG YANG YID GTAN MED PAS MTHO SRID RTZER
SKYES KYANG DMA' DMYAL BA'I ZANGS KHA NA YOD PA DANG
KHYAD MED PA YIN,

Or let's say lastly you can reach a birth as a being of pleasure in one of the higher two of the three realms of existence. These beings have no overt pain at all, but still by the very nature of life possess the most subtle form of suffering: the ever-present suffering of instant-by-instant aging. And these beings are totally helpless to keep themselves in their paradise; there always comes a day when the power of their past good deeds, which threw them there in the first place, finally runs dry. Then they touch the energy of one of their past bad deeds, and are forced to a lower birth. So you see, it doesn't really matter what wonderful things might come to you in the circle of life—none of them is stable, none of them is worth your trust. The very highest form of existence, that rare meditation level we call the "peak of life," is not the least bit better than the very lowest we can reach—hanging over a pot of molten steel in hell, about to be dipped in.

SDUG BSN GAL SPYIR BSAM PA LA LAM RIM CHEN MOR SDUG BSN GAL
BRGYAD BSAM PA DANG , DRUG BSAM PA, GSUM BSAM PA RNAMS
GSUNGS KYANG DANG PO BRGYAD NI MI LA SBYAR, PHYI MA GSUM
MJUG BSDU LA GSUNGS PAS, DES NA SDUG BSN GAL DRUG BSAM PA LA

Lord Tsongkapa, in his great exposition on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood, divides the contemplation of life's general sufferings into three sections. These are contemplating the eight sufferings, the six sufferings, and the three sufferings. The group of eight though applies more to life as a human, and the group of three is given as sort of a summary. Here then we'll speak some of how to do the contemplation on the six sufferings.[121]

SDUG BSNIGAL DRUG NI, NGES PA MED PA'I NYES PA, NGOMS PA MED PA'I NYES PA, LUS YANG NAS YANG DU 'DOR BA'I NYES PA, YANG YANG NYING MTSAMS SBYOR BA'I NYES PA, YANG YANG MTHO DMAN DU 'GYUR BA'I DE, GROGS MED PA'I DE BCAS

These six are as follows:

- 1) The problem that life has no certainty.
- 2) The problem that we always want more than we have.
- 3) The problem that we have to keep shucking off bodies, over and over again.
- 4) The problem that we have to keep going into a new life, over and over again.
- 5) The problem that we go up and down in our fortunes in life, over and over again.
- 6) The problem that no one can come along with us; ultimately we are alone.

LAM RIM LTAR YIN, 'JIG RTEN 'DI NA 'DOD PAS MI NGOMS PA 'DI LAS SKYON CHE BA MI 'DUG CES RGYAL PO NGA LAS NUS KYANG ZHAL CHEMS SU MDZAD, RANG RE RAB BYUNG RNAMS LA KLOG PA THOS BSAM DANG , SPONG BA BSAM GTAN TE BYA BA 'DI GNYIS LAS MED,

These six problems are described at length in the standard works on the Steps to Buddhahood. We should remember though King Mefeed, whose last words were "There is no greater evil in the world than the fact that we always want more than we have." [122] You and I are monks, and there are only two things we should be doing:

Read the holy books, get teaching on them,
contemplate their meaning.
Live a life of rejection, and stay in
meditation.

SPONG BA ZHES TSUL KHRIMS BSRUNG BA LA BYA, 'DI GNYIS LAS MI
'DA' BA ZHIG BYUNG NA MKHAS PA DANG GRUB THOB GNYIS KA
'DZOMS PA ZHIG 'ONG , 'DI GNYIS MED NA DON MANG BA, BYA BA
MANG BA LA SHOR NAS CHOS GANG YANG MI 'BYUNG , DE YANG 'DOD
CHUNG CHOG SHES MA BSTEN PA'I SKYON RED,

Here a "life of rejection" means a life where we keep our morality, and reject bad deeds. If we can keep from going beyond these two activities, then one day we can become both wise and realized. If though we neglect these two, we will lose ourselves to what they call "lots of things to think about and lots of things to do." And then we won't do any spiritual practice at all. People make this mistake, by the way, because they are unable to stick to the precept of "Keep your wants few; be easy to satisfy." [123]

'DIR SDUG BSNAL GSUM GSUNGS PAS, ZAG BCAS KYI TSOR BA SDUG
BSNAL THAMS CAD SDUG BSNAL GYI SDUG BSNAL DANG ,

Since the three types of suffering are mentioned later on in our root text, we'll describe them briefly. All impure feelings of pain constitute the first type of suffering: the "suffering of suffering."

ZAG BCAS KYI TSOR BA BDE BA THAMS CAD 'GYUR BA'I SDUG BSNAL
YIN, DE NI DPER NA TSA BAS GDUNGS TSE BSIL BA DANG , GRANGS BAS
GDUNGS TSE DRO BA DANG 'GRO SDOD SOGS LA BDE BAR SNANG
YANG ,

All impure feelings of pleasure constitute the second type of suffering: the "suffering of change." We can explain this suffering as follows. When you're in a place that's very hot, then something cool seems like pleasure. When you're in a place that's very cold, then something warm seems like pleasure. The same is true when you've had to walk a long way (sitting would seem a pleasure), or had to sit for a long time (walking would seem a pleasure).

DE BDE BA RANG MTSAN PA STE NGO BO NYID KYI BDE BA MA YIN TE
DE YIN NA DA DUNG JI TZAM BSTEN KYANG BDE BA CHE RU 'GRO DGOS

PA LA DE MI 'GRO BAR SLAR DE LAS SDUG BSNGAL 'BYUNG BA DE BDE
BA RANG MTSAN PA MIN PA'I RTAGS RED, 'GYUR BA'I SDUG BSNGAL
YANG DE LA ZER,

None of these things that seem to be pleasure though is pleasure by nature, or pleasure in its very essence. If they were, then you would feel more pleasant the more you had of them. But this is not the case, for as you get more and more of them they too start to give you pain. When this happens we can understand that they are not pleasure by nature. They are, in fact, suffering—they are what we call the "suffering of change."

RIGS DRUG GANG DU SKYES KYANG SO SO'I NYER LEN GYI LUS GRUB
TZAM NAS DE DANG DE'I SDUG BSNGAL RANG CHAS SU YOD PA NI
KHYAB PA 'DU BYED KYI SDUG BSNGAL YIN, NYER LEN GYI PHUNG PO
'DI GRUB PHYIN CHAD TSE 'DI'I SKYE RGA NA 'CHI LA SOGS PA'I SDUG
BSNGAL TSANG MA YONG SA'I RTEN BYED, TSE 'DI PHYI GNYIS KAR
SDUG BSNGAL GYI SDUG BSNGAL DANG , 'GYUR BA'I SDUG BSNGAL
GNYIS 'DREN BYED KYI SNOD LTA BUR BYED PAS NA, ZAG BCAS NYER
LEN GYI PHUNG PO'I SKYE BA LEN MI DGOS PA ZHIG MA BYUNG NA
TSER MA'I MAL DU NYAL BA LTAR SDUG BSNGAL KHO NA LAS MED,

The third type of suffering is known as the "pervasive suffering, which brings in more." The point here is that, regardless which one of the six kinds of birth we take, we take on a body which, by its very existence, comes complete with its own particular sufferings built in. From the first moment we take the various impure parts of our being on, from the first moment of their existence, they provide a basis for all the sufferings we have to look forward to in life: birth, aging, sickness, death, and all the rest. The impure parts of ourselves are like a big pot, sucking in the suffering of suffering, sucking in the suffering of change, in both this and our future lives. We must find a way to stop taking births, to stop taking on all the impure parts we're made of. Until we do, our existence will be like lying on a bed of upright needles—never a thing but pain.

'KHOR BA LAS THAR ZHES PA YANG LUNG PA GCIG NAS GZHAN ZHIG
TU THAR BA LTA BU LA MI ZER GYI, 'KHOR BA NI ZAG BCAS NYER LEN
GYI PHUNG PO'I RGYUN NAM CHA DE LA BYA BAS, DE BDAG MED
RTOGS PA'I SHES RAB KYIS RTZA BA NAS RGYUN BCAD PA NA 'KHOR BA
LAS THAR BA ZHES ZER BA YIN,

When we talk about "escaping cyclic life," it's not like running away from one

country and managing to reach another. "Cyclic life" is precisely the continued existence of, the very fact of, the impure parts that make us up, the impure parts of our being that we've taken on. And when the continued existence of these parts is stopped at its root by the wisdom that realizes that nothing has a self-nature, this then is our "escape from cyclic life."

DES PHYI MA'I SNANG SHAS LDOG TSUL BSHAD ZIN NAS,

This completes our explanation of how to stop desire for your future lives.

X. How to Know When You've Found Renunciation

GSUM PA NGES 'BYUNG DE SKYES PA'I TSAD NI,

The third and final section of our explanation of renunciation describes the point at which we can say a person has succeeded in developing it; as the next verse of the root text reads,

,DE LTAR GOMS PAS 'KHOR BA'I PHUN TSOGS LA,
,YID SMON SKAD CIG TZAM YANG MI SKYE ZHING ,
,NYIN MTSAN KUN TU THAR PA DON GNYER BLO,
,BYUNG NA DE TSE NGES 'BYUNG SKYES PA LAGS,
,ZHES PAS BSTAN,

(5)

**When you've meditated thus and feel not even
A moment's wish for the goods things of cyclic life,
And when you begin to think both night and day
Of achieving freedom, you've found renunciation.**

DE LTAR MI RTAG PA DANG , NGAN SONG DANG , LAS 'BRAS DANG ,
BDE 'GRO'I SDUG BSNGAL RNAMS BSAMS PAS, 'KHOR BA 'DI LAS GTAN
NAS THAR PA ZHIG MA BYUNG PHYIN LHA'I BDE SKYID THOB KYANG
SDUG BSNGAL KHO NA LAS SNYING PO MED PAR MTHONG BA MA ZAD

Suppose *you've contemplated thus*, on the points already mentioned: your impermanence, the births of misery, the principles of actions and their consequences, and the sufferings of the happier births. And because of this you see for yourself that it's all meaningless: that even if you could achieve the kind

of happiness that pleasure-beings enjoy in their paradises, it's really nothing but suffering; that until you can escape forever from cyclic life, this is the only way it will be.

TSANGS PA BRGYA BYIN DANG 'KHOR LOS SGYUR BA'I RGYAL PO'I DPAL
'BYOR LA'ANG YID SMON SKAD CIG TZAM YANG MI SKYE ZHING , NYIN
MTSAN KUN TU ZHES PA DPER NA, SEMS KHRAL CHEN PO YOD PA'I MI
DES MTSAN MO GNYID NAM SAD RES KYANG DE LHANDU LHANDU DRAN
PA LTAR NAM BSAMS KYANG NGAM NGAM SHUGS KYIS THAR PA DON
GNYER GYI BLO BCOS MA MA YIN PA SKYES PA NI NGES 'BYUNG SKYES
PA'I TSAD YIN,

And then it comes even stronger: in your heart, you *feel not even a moment's wish* even for the fantastic riches of the god-like beings they call Pure-one and Hundred-Gift; you feel no wish even for the wealth of a Wheel Emperor, who rules the world. And then a certain thought comes to your mind *both "night and day"*; that is, in every conscious minute, the thought rushes into your mind on its own—the way a man with some great worry on his mind remembers his problem all in a rush, every time he wakes up during the night. *When you begin to think this way of achieving freedom*, when you genuinely want freedom this way, well then you know *you've found renunciation*.

LAM GTZO 'DIR DAL 'BYOR RNYED DKA' NAS NGES 'BYUNG GI BAR GYI
CHUNG 'BRING GI LAM RNAMS NGES 'BYUNG GI KHONGS SU BSDU BA
NI GZHUNG 'DI'I KHYAD CHOS RED, NGES 'BYUNG NI SNYING RJE CHEN
PO'I RGYU THUN MONG MA YIN PAS SNYING RJE 'DI 'ONG BA LA SNGON
DU NGES 'BYUNG GI BSAM PA BCOS MA MA YIN PA ZHIG SKYE DGOS,
RANG SDUG BSNGAL GYIS MNAR TSUL BSAMS PAS BA SPU G-YO 'GUL
MED PA ZHIG LA SEMS CAN GZHAN SDUG BSNGAL GYIS MNAR BA LA
MI BZOD PA'I SNYING RJE 'ONGS MED DE, SPYOD 'JUG LAS,

Now the standard texts on the Steps to Buddhahood have sections ranging from the teaching on the difficulty of finding leisure and fortune, on up to instructions on renunciation, all included under the two headings of "paths for practitioners of lesser scope" and "paths for practitioners of medium scope."

Here in the *Three Principal Paths* though, they all come under the one heading of "renunciation." This is a unique feature of this work, and there is a reason for it. Renunciation is the one special cause that brings you what we call "great compassion"; to get this compassion, you must first find true thoughts of

renunciation. Great compassion is a state of mind where you can absolutely no longer bear to see other beings tormented by the sufferings of life; there's no way you can achieve it as long as your concern about the way life torments you yourself is so feeble that it couldn't blow down a single upright hair. As the famous verses of *The Bodhisattva's Life* say,

,SEMS CAN DE DAG RNAMS LA SNGON,
,RANG GI DON DU 'DI 'DRA'I SEMS,
,RMI LAM DU YANG MA RMIS NA,
,GZHAN GYI DON DU GA LA SKYE,
,ZHES GSUNGS,

If people like these have never before
Even in the dreams they dream
Felt such a wish just for themselves,
Then how can it come to them for others?[124]

DE YANG RANG STENG DU BSGOM PA NGES 'BYUNG DANG , GZHAN
STENG DU BSGOM PA SNYING RJE YIN,

Thus we can say that renunciation and compassion are the same state of mind, just that one is developed by meditating on your own situation, and the other by meditating on others' situation.

'DI SKYE BA LA 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA'I LEGS GSUNG BYANG CHUB
LAM RIM LA THOS BSAM GYIS ZHUGS TE BLO SBYANG DGOS, RANG CAG
RNAMS CHAGS SOGS NYON MONGS PA JE 'PHEL DU 'GRO BA 'DI SKYES
BU CHUNG 'BRING GI LAM TZAM LA'ANG BLO MA SBYANGS PA'I SKYON
YIN PAS,

To develop this compassion, we must undertake to study and contemplate the Steps on the path to Buddhahood, that great teaching of the gentle protector Tsongkapa, and thus gradually train our minds. People like you and I see our feelings of desire, and our other mental afflictions, grow stronger day by day; the problem is that we have not even been able to train our minds in the paths for people of lesser and medium scopes of practice.

BLO GROS DANG LDAN PA RNAMS KYIS MNGON SHES DANG , RDZU
'PHRUL, GNAS SGO 'BYED ZER BA SOGS BON DANG MU STEGS PA LTA
BUS KYANG BYA BAR NUS PA'I LOG CHOS LA YID MI PHYOGS PAR

BSTAN PA SPYI' GNAD LUNG SDE SNOD GSUM DANG , LAM BSLAB PA
GSUM GYI SNYING PO BSDUS PA NI BYANG CHUB LAM RIM 'DI YIN PAS
'DI LA THOS BSAM SGOM GSUM BYA DGOS,

Intelligent people then should stop giving any thought to practicing mistaken paths that any local shaman or follower of some deficient "religion" could master: things like trying to develop extra-sensory powers, or the ability to perform miraculous feats, or the so-called "opening day"—pay-as-you-go religion. Discriminating people should instead learn, and contemplate, and meditate upon the three collections of scripture (which contain the important bulk of the teaching in general), and upon these Steps to Buddhahood (for they are the collected essence of the path of the three trainings).[125]

LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI LA ZHUGS NA ZHI GNAS DANG LAM GTZO RNAM
GSUM, SNGAGS KYI RIM PA GNYIS MAN CHAD 'KHRUL MED CIG RNYED
DE 'ONG BAS SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG THOB PA'I RE BA'ANG 'DI
NAS BYAR YOD, SNYING RJE CHEN PO MA SKYES NA BYANG CHUB KYI
SEMS RGYUD LA SKYE THABS MED PAS SNYING RJE CHEN PO RGYUD LA
SKYE BA GAL CHE GSUNGS,

If you start off on these Steps, then you will never err, and will gradually gain the high meditative state called "quietude," and the three principal paths, and everything else on up to the two levels of the secret way. Any hope we have of attaining Buddhahood then rests upon this very teaching. And we must absolutely try to develop great compassion in our hearts; if we cannot develop this compassion, our Lama concluded, then there is no way at all we can develop the sublime wish to achieve Buddhahood, for the sake of every living being.

Notes to Reading Six

[108.] *the realms*: See note 14.

[109.] *Non-virtue brings all sufferings...* Quotation from f. 116b of the Master's *Jewel Rosary*, entry 3.

[110.] *the three rare jewels*: So named because they are supremely valuable and infrequently found—the Buddha, defined as the ultimate shelter, a being who has completed the highest possible good for himself and others; the Dharma, realizations or the end of undesirable qualities within a person's mind; and the Sangha, or any being who has perceived the true nature of reality directly.

[111.] *the monk named Lekkar*: He spent many years in the service of the Buddha himself but failed miserably to understand his teachings. The dismaying story is found in the twelfth chapter of the *Total-Nirvana Sutra* (ff. 285b-418b, vol. 2, entry 81) and references to it appear often in later literature: see for example f. 136b of Pabongka Rinpoche's *Liberation* (entry 47); p. 161 of the great Potowa's *Jewels* (entry 19); and f. 5a of the first Panchen Lama's *Path of Bliss* (entry 50).

[112.] *as well as Devadatta*: A close relation of the Buddha who was driven by jealousy to despise the Teacher. A "heap" of scriptures is sometimes described as the amount you could write with the quantity of ink that Rabten, a fantastic mythical elephant, could carry on his back. One sutra says that Devadatta could recite enough scriptures to make 60,000 loads for the great elephant "Incense." Numerous textual references to the story of the misled monk are listed by Prof. Edgerton (p. 271, entry 92).

[113.] *an appropriate antidote*: Buddhism teaches that there are four antidote forces, which together can remove the power of any bad deed. The "basis" force consists of thinking who it was that was offended by your deed, and who it is you will rely on to clear yourself of it. The "destruction" force is an intense feeling of shame and regret for the deed, which will certainly return to hurt you. The "reverse" force is to turn yourself away from doing that kind of deed again. The "counteragent" force is to undertake some spiritual practice—confession, meditation, or any good deed—to offset the power of the wrong (see Pabongka Rinpoche, entry 47, ff. 109-113, 246-8).

[114.] *the ten non-virtues*: The ten non-virtues to be avoided in Buddhist practice are said to be a very gross abbreviation of the many thousands that we do. The

ten include three by body (killing any being, stealing, and sexual misconduct); four in speech (lying, divisive speech, harsh words, and idle talk); and three within the mind (coveting others' things, thoughts to harm, and wrong views such as believing that there is no connection between what you do now and what you experience later).

[115.] *realized being*: Any person who has directly perceived "emptiness"; this will be explained below in the section on correct view.

[116.] *The path begins...* Source of quotation not found.

[117.] *Revive*: The hell is so named because the inhabitants beat each other until they all fall down senseless; then they revive and start to fight one another again. The process is repeated over and over for thousands of years, until the beings are finally able to die.

[118.] *Word of the Gentle One*: Counted among the principal works on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood, and composed by the "Great Fifth" Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617- 1682); see entry 15. This same Dalai Lama has written two commentaries on the *Three Principal Paths* (entries 16,17).

[119.] *"Path of Bliss" and "Quick Path"*: The former work is another of the classic explanations of the Steps to Buddhahood and was composed by the first of the great Panchen Lamas, Lobsang Chukyi Gyeltsen (1570-1662), who was also the tutor of the above-mentioned Fifth Dalai Lama. The latter treatise was written in explanation of the first by Panchen Lama II, Lobsang Yeshe (see note 97, and entries 50,54).

[120.] *the fighting*: It is said that the lesser pleasure beings are driven out of attachment and jealousy to wage frequent war on their slightly more glorious cousins, the full pleasure beings.

[121.] *eight, six, and three types of suffering*: The eight sufferings are being born, getting older, getting sick, dying, encountering things that are unpleasant, losing what is pleasant, trying and failing to get what you want, and the suffering of simply being alive and having all the impure parts of ourselves that we do (Lord Tsongkapa, entry 61, ff. 137- 151; Pabongka Rinpoche, entry 47, ff. 250-267). An explanation of the three sufferings follows in the text.

[122.] *King Mefeed*: A legendary king of yore who was said to have been born

spontaneously; he was named from the fact that the concubines of his father competed to breast-feed the miraculous child and thereby become the Queen Mother. His story is mentioned in many works; see Pabongka Rinpoche's *Liberation* (f. 252a), as well as the list in Prof. Edgerton's *Dictionary* under the king's Sanskrit name, Mandhata (p. 430, entry 92).

[123.] *Keep your wants few...* The dictum is expounded upon by the great Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu (c. 300 A.D.) in the sixth chapter of his classic *Treasure of Wisdom* (see pp. 316- 7, entry 14).

[124.] *If people like these...* From the eloquent manual for bodhisattvas by the Buddhist poet-philosopher Shantideva (695- 743 A.D.). Quotation on f. 3a, entry 71.

[125.] *three collections and three trainings:* See note 64.

The Key that Unlocks the Door to the Noble Path (Lam bzang sgo 'byed) written by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-91), a commentary upon the *Three Principal Paths (Lam-gtzo rnam-gsum)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), folios 22b-23b.

The Second Path:

The Wish to Achieve Enlightenment For Every Living Being

XI. Why You Need the Wish for Enlightenment

GNYIS PA LA GSUM, SEMS BSKYED DGOS PA'I RGYU MTSAN, SEMS DE
BSKYED PA'I TSUL, SEMS DE SKYES PA'I TSAD DO, , DANG PO NI,

We have now reached the second of the four parts in the actual body of the text. This is an explanation of the wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of every living being. This explanation itself will include three sections: why you need the wish for enlightenment, how to go about developing this wish, and how to know when you've finally developed it. The next verse of the root text tells us why we need this great wish:

,NGES 'BYUNG DE YANG RNAM DAG SEMS BSKYED KYIS,
,ZIN PA MED NA BLA MED BYANG CHUB KYI,
,PHUN TSOGS BDE BA'I RGYU RU MI 'GYUR BAS,
,BLO LDAN RNAMS KYIS BYANG CHUB SEMS MCHOG BSKYED,
,CES PAS BSTAN TE,

(6)

**Renunciation though can never bring
The total bliss of matchless Buddhahood
Unless it's bound by the purest wish; and so,
The wise seek the high wish for enlightenment.**

DE LTA BU'I NGES 'BYUNG GI BSAM PA SHUGS DRAG YOD KYANG , DGE
BA GANG BYAS THAR PA'I RGYU LAS THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA'I RGYUR
MI 'GRO STE, NGES 'BYUNG NI NYAN RANG LA'ANG YOD PAS SO, ,

You may be able to gain some fierce feelings of renunciation as we described it above; any good deeds you do under their influence though can only bring you

an ordinary nirvana—they alone can never serve to bring you to omniscient enlightenment. We can see this from the fact that even practitioners of lower paths—people we call "listeners" and "self-made victors"—can possess true renunciation.[126]

DES NA 'TSANG RGYA BA LA THOG MAR LAM GTZO GSUM DANG , DE'I
NANG NAS KYANG BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS 'DI SKYE DGOS, BYANG
CHUB KYI SEMS RIN PO CHE 'DI MED NA MNGON SHES DANG RDZU
'PHRUL SOGS JI TZAM YOD KYANG THEG CHEN PA'I GRAL DU MI TSUD
CING , SEMS CAN THAMS CAD SRID ZHI'I RGUD PA MTHA' DAG LAS
DGROL BA'I BYANG CHUB KYI RGYUR GTAN NAS MI 'GRO BAS PHUN
TSOGS BDE BA'I RGYUR MI 'GYUR,

For full enlightenment then a person needs to develop within his mind all three of the principal paths—and more specifically, he must have gained the second path: the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being. You may possess extra-sensory powers, you may be able to perform miracles, you may have any number of fantastic qualities—but unless you have this precious jewel in your heart, you will never enter that select group of people who practice the greater way. Without this highest wish, none of your qualities will ever bring you total bliss—none of them, none of them at all, will bring you Buddhahood: the ability to free each and every living being from all the troubles of cyclic life, and from those of a lower escape from cyclic life.[127]

NYAN RANG DGRA BCOM PA RNAMS LA STONG NYID MNGON SUM DU
RTOGS PA SOGS YON TAN GSER GYI RI LTA BU YOD KYANG LAM DES
'TSANG MI RGYA BA NI BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS MED PAS LAN PA YIN,

Those great practitioners of the lower paths—"enemy destroyers" of the "listener" or "self-made" type—possess fine qualities like a huge mountain made of pure gold; even such qualities as the ability to perceive emptiness directly. But these paths never bring them to Buddhahood. Why? Because they lack the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being.[128]

BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS 'DI YOD NA, SPYOD 'JUG DANG , 'JUG PA, DKON
BRTZEGS SOGS LAS GSUNGS PA LTAR 'GRO BA LHA MI DANG BCAS PAS
PHYAG BYA BA'I 'OS SU 'GYUR BA DANG , NYAN RANG RIGS KYI SGO
NAS ZIL GYIS GNON PA DANG , GANG ZAG DES DGE BA THA NA BYA
ROG LA ZAN CHANG GCIG SBYIN PA TSUN CHAD THEG PA CHEN PO'I
CHOS SU 'GRO ,

If you do gain this great wish, you become a person who truly deserves to have the entire world—with all its different kinds of beings up to humans and gods—bow down at your feet, just as holy books like *The Bodhisattva's Life*, and *Entering the Middle Way*, and *The Rare Stack* describe it.[129] You find yourself in a different class of being, and then you completely outshine listeners and self-made victors—practitioners of the lower paths. Every virtuous act you do, even down to throwing a scrap of food to some wild bird, becomes a practice of the greater way; becomes a cause for your future Buddhahood; becomes the way of life of a bodhisattva.

SANGS RGYAS BA'I RGYUR 'GRO , RGYAL SRAS KYI SPYOD PAR 'GRO ,
SEMS 'DI YOD PA'I GANG ZAG DE LA PHYOGS BCU'I SANGS RGYAS
RNAMS KYIS SRAS DANG 'DRA BAR DGONGS, BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA'
CHEN PO RNAMS KYIS KYANG SPUN DANG 'DRA BAR DGONGS PA YIN,

If a person possesses this holy wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of every living being, then all the countless Buddhas in all the ten directions of space look upon him as their son. And all the great bodhisattvas look upon him as their brother.

DER MA ZAD THEG CHEN LA ZHUGS MA ZHUGS DANG , TSE GCIG LA
'TSANG RGYA MI RGYA YANG BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS YOD MED LA RAG
LAS PAS SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG 'DOD NA BYANG CHUB KYI
SEMS LA BLO SBYONG DGOS PA YIN GSUNGS,

But that's not all; the whole question of whether you have reached the greater way, and the whole question of whether you will be able to achieve Buddhahood in this one short life, depend on whether you have truly gained this wish. So if you want enlightenment, our Lama concluded, you must train your thoughts in the wish.

Notes to Reading Seven

[126.] *listeners and self-made victors*: Practitioners who have not yet developed the highest motivation of attaining Buddhahood for the sake of all beings. "Listeners" are so named because they can listen to the higher teachings and relate them to others, but not practice these instructions themselves. "Self-made victors" can reach their goal without relying on a spiritual guide in this life, although only because of extensive instruction by countless teachers in their past lives.

[127.] *a lower escape*: See note 83.

[128.] *"enemy destroyers"*: Those who have permanently defeated the enemy of mental afflictions—such as desire, anger, and ignorance—and have therefore achieved nirvana. See also note 83.

[129.] *"The Bodhisattva's Life," "Entering the Middle Way," and "The Rare Stack"*: Master Shantideva's manual for bodhisattvas has been listed at note 124. The classic text on correct view by Master Chandrakirti, the illustrious 7th Century Indian philosopher of Buddhism, will be covered below with the third of the principal paths. In each case, the benefits of the wish for enlightenment appear in the opening verses. *The Rare Stack* is a separate section of the Buddhist canon containing some 49 different sutras. One often quoted in explanations of the wish for Buddhahood is *The Chapter of Light Protector* (entry 75); it contains eloquent descriptions of the benefits of the wish throughout, and the section around f. 237 is particularly relevant here.

The Key that Unlocks the Door to the Noble Path (Lam bzang sgo 'byed) written by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-91), a commentary upon the *Three Principal Paths (Lam-gtzo rnam-gsum)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), folios 23b-29a.

XII. How to Develop the Wish for Enlightenment

GNYIS PA SEMS DE BSKYED PA'I TSUL NI,

The second section in our explanation of the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being describes how to develop this wish. As the next two verses say,

, SHUGS DRAG CHU BO BZHI YI RGYUN GYIS KHYER,
,BZLOG DKA' LAS KYI 'CHING BA DAM POS BSDAMS,
,BDAG 'DZIN LCAGS KYI DRA BA'I SPUBS SU TSUD,
,MA RIG MUN PA'I SMAG CHEN KUN NAS 'THIBS,

,MU MED SRID PAR SKYE ZHING SKYE BA RU,
,SDUG BSNGAL GSUM GYIS RGYUN CHAD MED PAR MNAR,
,GNAS SKABS 'DI 'DRAR GYUR PA'I MA RNAMS KYI,
,NGANG TSUL BSAMS NAS SEMS MCHOG BSKYED BAR MDZOD,
,CES PAS BSTAN,

(7,8)

**They're swept along on four fierce river currents,
Chained up tight in past deeds, hard to undo,
Stuffed in a steel cage of grasping "self,"
Smothered in the pitch-black ignorance.**

**In a limitless round they're born, and in
their births
Are tortured by three sufferings without a break;
Think how your mothers feel, think of what's
happening
To them: try to develop this highest wish.**

DE YANG SPYOD 'JUG LAS,
,SEMS CAN RNAMS KYI KLAD NAD TZAM,
,BSAL LO SNYAM DU BSAM NA YANG ,

,PHAN 'DOGS BSAM PA DANG LDAN PAS,
,BSOD NAMS DPAG MED LDAN GYUR NA,

,SEMS CAN RE RE'I MI BDE BA,
,DPAG TU MED PA BSAL 'DOD CING ,
,RE RE'ANG YON TAN DPAG MED DU,
,BSGRUB PAR 'DOD PA SMOS CI DGOS,
,ZHES DANG ,

We may begin with another pair of verses, from *The Bodhisattva's Life*:

Even just wishing you could stop
A headache another person has
Can bring you merit without measure
Because of the helpful intent you feel.

What need then to mention the wish
That you could stop the immeasurable pain
Of every being, and put every one
In a state of measureless happiness?[130]

DPA' BYIN GYIS ZHUS PA'I MDO LAS,
,BYANG CHUB SEMS KYI BSOD NAMS GANG ,
,DE LA GAL TE GZUGS MCHIS NA,
,NAM MKHA'I KHAMS NI KUN GANG STE,
,DE NI DE BAS LHAG PAR 'GYUR,

The *Sutra that Viradatta Requested* says as well,

Were the merit of the wish for enlightenment
To take on some kind of physical form
It would fill the reaches of space itself
And then spill over farther still.[131]

,ZHES SOGS BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS BSKYED PA'I PHAN YON MTHA' YAS
PAR GSUNGS PA LTAR MA SEMS CAN RNAMS SDUG BSNGAL SHUGS
DRAG PA 'DOD PA'I CHU BO, LTA BA'I CHU BO, SRID PA'I CHU BO, MA
RIG PA'I CHU BO STE RGYU DUS KYI CHU BO BZHI DANG , SKYE BA, RGA
BA, NA BA, 'CHI BA STE 'BRAS DUS KYI CHU BO BZHI'I RGYUN GYI
PHYOGS SU KHYER ZHING ,

The benefits of this wish to achieve enlightenment for all living beings are thus described, in these and other texts, as limitless. And so here are the mass of living beings, all of them our mothers, *swept along* the flow of *four river currents*, all *fierce* suffering. From one viewpoint, while they are acting as causes, these four are the torrent of desire, the torrent of views, the torrent of the ripe force of deeds, and the torrent of ignorance. Later, when they serve as results, they are the four torrents of birth, and aging, and illness, and death.

CHU BO'I RGYUN DE'I NANG DU KHYER YANG RKANG LAG RNAMS
THAG PAS BSDAMS PA LTAR BZLOG DKA' BA LAS KYI ZHAGS PA'AM
'CHING BAS DAM POR BSDAMS,

And these mother beings are not just hurtling along in these four great rivers; it's just as if their hands and feet too were bound fast—they are *chained up tight*, they are snared, *in* their own *past deeds*, *hard to undo*.

DES KYANG MI TSAD PA SDOM BYED KYI THAG PA DE 'BRENG PA DANG
RTZID THAG LTA BU MA YIN PAR GCOD DKA' BA'AM THAR DKA' BA
LCAGS THAG GIS BSDAMS PA LTA BU'I BDAG 'DZIN LCAGS KYI DRA BA'I
SBUBS SU TSUD,

But that's not all; the bonds which hold them tight are no regular ties, like our twined ropes of yak-skin or hair. It's more like our mothers are clasped in fetters of iron, ever so hard to sever, ever so hard to unshackle—for while they are swept along they are *stuffed in a steel cage of grasping* to some non-existent "*self*."

DER MA ZAD NYIN MO YIN NA GZHAN LA 'BOD PA DANG ROGS SBREL
BA TSUN CHAD KYI RE BA ZHIG BYA RGYU YOD KYANG , DE LTAR MIN
PAR MTSAN MO NAM GUNG MUN PA'I SMAG RUM NAS CHU BO'I
GZHUNG DU KHYER BA LTA BU'I MA RIG PA'I MUN PA'I SMAG CHEN
GYIS KUN NAS GTIBS SHING ,

And there's more. If there were some daylight, these mother beings would have some glimmer of hope—they could at least cry out, and try to get some help. But it is night, and the darkest hour of the night, and in pitch-black dark they are swept downstream the mighty river: they are *smothered* completely *in pitch-black ignorance*.

MTHA' MED MU MED KYI SRID PA'I RGYA MTSOR SKYE ZHING SKYE BA

LA SDUG BSNGAL GYI SDUG BSNGAL, 'GYUR BA'I SDUG BSNGAL, KHYAB
PA 'DU BYED KYI SDUG BSNGAL GSUM GYIS RGYUN CHAD MED PAR
DUS RTAG TU MNAR NAS

In a limitless round, in an endless round, they are born into the ocean of life, and in these births they are tortured by three different kinds of suffering: the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and the all-pervading suffering. And their torture comes to them without a break—it is always there.

SDUG BSNGAL BZOD PAR DKA' BA'I GNAS SKABS 'DI 'DRAR GYUR
KYANG , MA RANG GI NGOS NAS NI BYA THABS MED LA, DE LAS 'DON
PA'I KHUR BU RANG LA BABS SHING , 'DON PA'I THABS DA LTA RANG
LA BSGRUB TU YOD PAS NA, MA RNAMS SDUG BSNGAL GYIS MNAR BA'I
NGANG TSUL BSAMS NAS DE LAS SGROL BA'I KHUR 'KHYER BA'I LHAG
BSAM SOGS LA RIM GYIS BLO SBYANGS TE BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS RIN
PO CHE SKYE BA'I THABS LA 'BAD DGOS,

This is *what's happening to them*, to our mother beings, this is their situation: unbearable pain. There's nothing they can do like this to help themselves; the son though has a chance at hand to pull his mother free. He must find a way, and find it now, to grasp her hand and draw her out. And the way he must try is to *develop this jewel wish* for enlightenment: he must do so first by *thinking how his mothers feel*, tortured by pain; then by deciding to take personal responsibility, the duty of freeing them, upon himself; and so on, all in the proper stages.

DE SKYE BA LA BSAM DGOS, BSAM PA LA THOS DGOS PA YIN, SEMS CAN
THAMS CAD BDE BA DANG LDAN 'DOD LHANG LHANG YOD PA BYAMS
PA DANG , SDUG BSNGAL DANG BRAL 'DOD LHANG LHANG YOD PA
SNYING RJE, DE YANG SHIN TU GCES PA'I BU GCIG PU NAD KYIS ZIN PA'I
MA DES SPYOD LAM THAMS CAD DU BU DE NAD LAS MYUR DU GROL
THABS SHIG BYUNG NA CI MA RUNG SNYAM PA RGYUN CHAD MED
PAR NGAM NGAM SHUGS KYIS BLO LA LHANG LHANG YOD PA LTA BU
NI SNYING RJE CHEN PO SKYES PA'I TSAD YIN,

To actually gain the wish for enlightenment he must first contemplate it. To contemplate it, he must first learn about it from another. "Loving-kindness" is an almost obsessive desire that each and every living being find happiness. "Compassion" is an almost obsessive desire that they be free of any pain. Think of how a mother feels when her one and only and most beloved son is in the throes of a serious illness. Wherever she goes, whatever she does, she is always

thinking how wonderful it would be if she could find some way of freeing him quickly from his sickness. These thoughts come to her mind in a steady stream, without a break, and all of their own, automatically. They become an obsession with her. When we feel this way towards every living being, and only then, we can say we have gained what they call "great compassion."

SANGS RGYAS KYI BSTAN PA 'DI LA BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS RIN PO CHE
LA BLO SBYONG TSUL RGYU 'BRAS MAN NGAG BDUN DANG , BDAG
GZHAN MNYAM BRJE GNYIS YOD, DE GNYIS GANG GI SGO NAS BLO
SBYANG NA'ANG BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS NGES PAR SKYE, DE SBYONG
BA'I THABS TSANG LA MA NOR BA, SA STENG 'DI NA 'GRAN ZLA DANG
BRAL BA NI 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO'I BSTAN PA'I SNYING
PO BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI YIN PAS 'DI'I SGO NAS BYANG
CHUB KYI SEMS LA BLO SBYANG DGOS,

Here in the teachings of the Buddha there are two methods given for training one's mind in this precious jewel, the wish for enlightenment. The first is known as the "seven-part, cause-and-effect instruction." The second we call "exchanging self and others." No matter which of the two you use to train your mind, you can definitely gain the wish for enlightenment. The way to train oneself in the wish, the way which is complete and which never errs, the way unmatched by any other here upon this earth, is the instruction of the Steps of the path to Buddhahood, the very essence of all the teachings of our gentle protector, the great Tsongkapa. Thus you should train your mind in the wish for enlightenment by using this very instruction.

BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SBYONG TSUL MDOR BSDUS NA, THOG MAR
BTANG SNYOMS DANG , DE NAS MAR SHES SOGS NAS RIM GYIS BSGOM,
MAR SHES, DRIN DRAN, DRIN GZO GSUM NI YID 'ONG GI BYAMS PA'I
RGYU DANG , YID 'ONG GI BYAMS PA NI DE GSUM GYI 'BRAS BU DANG ,
SNYING RJE CHEN PO'I RGYU YIN,

Here we'll give just a brief summary of how one trains himself in the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being. The start-off is to practice feelings of neutrality towards all beings; after that, one begins meditation on each of the steps from "mother recognition" on up. The first three steps are to recognize all beings as one's mothers, to feel gratitude for their kindness, and to wish to repay that kindness. These three act as a cause for what we call "beautiful" loving-kindness. This type of loving-kindness is itself the fourth step; it is both an effect brought about by the first three, and a cause for the fifth: great compassion.

BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SHUGS DRAG YOD MED KYANG SNYING RJE
CHEN PO SHUGS CHE CHUNG GIS 'BYUNG BA YIN, SNYING RJE MA
SKYES NA SKYE BA'I THABS BLA MA SPYAN RAS GZIGS KYI RNAL 'BYOR
BSGOM, GSOL BA 'DEBS, SPYAN RAS GZIGS KYI THUGS DANG RANG
SEMS DBYER MED DU BSRE BA'I RNAL 'BYOR LA 'BAD NA BYIN RLABS
ZHUGS TE SNYING RJE CHEN PO SKYE BA LA KHYAD CHE BA MAN
NGAG YIN, ZAB GNAD GZHAN 'GA' RE YOD KYANG TSOGS SU MI 'CHAD
GSUNGS,

The relative intensity of one's wish for enlightenment depends on the intensity of one's feeling of great compassion. If you find it difficult to develop compassion, you can practice the meditation known as "Lama Loving-Gaze" to help you gain it. If you make good efforts to perform this meditation and the proper supplications, as well as the practice where you visualize that your mind and that of Loving-Gaze are mixed inseparably, then you can gain a blessing for it.[132] This is a very special personal instruction for developing great compassion. There were, our Lama explained, a number of other profound points in this regard—but he would not detail them in a public gathering.

SNYING RJE CHEN PO SKYES PA NA GZHAN DON KHUR DU 'KHYER BA'I
LHAG BSAM SKYE, DE LAS BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SKYE BA YIN,

Once you develop great compassion, then you can develop the extraordinary form of personal responsibility, where you take upon yourself the load of working for others' benefit. And the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being comes from this.

DE YANG BTANG SNYOMS SGOM PA LA THOG MAR DGRA GNYEN
GANG YANG MA YIN PA'I BAR MA'I SEMS CAN ZHIG LA CHAGS SDANG
GI SEMS SNYOMS, DE NAS RANG GI YID LA 'BAB PA'I GNYEN ZHIG DANG
, YID DU MI 'ONG BA'I DGRA GNYIS MDUN DU BSAM STE, GNYEN 'DIS
KYANG TSE RABS MANG POR DGRAR SKYES TE GNOD PA BYAS, DGRA
'DIS KYANG TSE RABS MANG POR GNYEN DU GYUR NAS PHAN BTAGS
TSUL BSAM STE CHAGS SDANG GI SEMS SNYOMS,

The meditation on neutrality goes like this. First you put your thoughts in an even state, free of feelings of like and dislike, by thinking about someone who is for you a neutral figure: neither your enemy nor your friend. Then you imagine that two people are sitting before you: one of your best-loved friends, and one of

your ugliest enemies. Next you think very carefully about how the friend has, in many of your previous lives, taken birth as your enemy and hurt you. You think too about how the enemy has, in so many of your past lives, taken birth as your friend and helped you. This puts your mind in the even state, free of feelings of like and dislike.

DE NAS SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYANG RANG RANG GI NGOS NAS BDE
BA 'DOD PA'ANG MNYAM, SDUG BSNAL MI 'DOD PA'ANG MNYAM, DE
THABS CAD RANG GI DGRA GNYEN GNYIS KA LAN GRANGS MANG PO
BYAS PA'ANG MNYAM NA, SU LA NI CHAGS PAR BYA, SU LA NI SDANG
BAR BYA SNYAM DU MKHA' KHYAB KYI SEMS CAN THAMS CAD LA
SEMS SNYOMS PA MA SKYES KYI BAR DU BSAM DGOS,

You go on then to think about how all living beings are equal in that, from his own point of view, each one of them wants to be happy. They are equal too in not wanting pain. And they are equal in that every one has acted as both my enemy and my friend, many many times. So who am I supposed to like? And who am I supposed to dislike? You have to keep on practicing this way until, one day, you gain neutral feelings towards all sentient beings, as vast in extent as space itself.

MAR SHES SGOM PA LA RNAME 'GREL LAS GSUNGS PA'I RIG PA'I YA
MTHA' THUG MED DU SGRUB PA'I RIGS PA 'DI SBYAR NA MAR SHES
SKYE BA LA PHAN CHE BAS 'DIR MDOR BSDU NA,

The next step is the meditation where you recognize that every living being is your mother. Gaining this recognition is much easier if you apply the line of reasoning mentioned in the *Commentary on Valid Perception* for demonstrating the infinite regression of one's awareness. We'll present this reasoning here, in brief.[133]

RANG GI DE RING GI RIG PA 'DI KHA SANG GI RIG PA'I RIG RGYUN
DANG , DA LO'I RIG PA 'DI LO SNGA MA'I RIG PA'I RIG RGYUN YIN PA
BZHIN DU, RANG GI TSE 'DI'I RIG PA 'DI TSE SNGA MA'I RIG PA'I RIG
RGYUN DANG , TSE SNGA MA'I RIG PA DE YANG DE'I TSE SNGA MA
SNGA MA'I RIG RGYUN YIN PAS DE GA NANG BZHIN PHAR DED NA 'DI
PHAN CHAD DU MED BYA BA GTAN NAS MED PAR RIG PA'I YA MTHA'
THUG MED DU 'GRUB CING ,

Your awareness of today is a mental continuation of the awareness you had

yesterday. This year's awareness is a mental continuation of the awareness you had the year before. Just so, your awareness over this entire life is a mental continuation of the awareness you had in your former life. The awareness you had in your former life was, in turn, a mental continuation of the awareness you had in the life before that. You can continue back in a regression like this and absolutely never reach some point where you can say, "Prior to this, I had no awareness." This then proves the infinite regression of one's awareness.

DE BZHIN DU RANG GI 'KHOR BA LA THOG MA'I MTHA' MED PAS SKYE
BA LA YA MTHA' MED, SA PHYOGS 'DIR MA SKYES BYA BA MED, SA
PHYOGS RE RE LA'ANG GRANGS MED PA RE SKYES, SEMS CAN 'DI LTA
BU'I LUS MA BLANGS BYA BA MED, BLANGS PA RE RE'ANG GRANGS
MED PA RE BLANGS, KHYI GCIG BU'I SKYE BA BLANGS PA'ANG GRANGS
KYIS MI CHOD, SEMS CAN THAMS CAD LA DE LTAR YIN,

My own circle of life then must also be beginningless, and the births I have taken as well can have no starting point. There exists no place where I have never taken birth. I have taken birth in every single place, countless times. There exists no creature whose body I have not worn. I have worn every kind of body, countless times. Just the lives I have taken as a dog are themselves beyond any number to count. And the same is true for every living being.

DES NA SEMS CAN 'DIS RANG GI MA MA BYAS BYA BA GCIG KYANG
MED, SEMS CAN RE RES KYANG RANG GI MA GRANGS MED PA RE BYAS
PA SHA STAG YIN, MI GCIG PU'I RTEN LA RANG GI MA BYAS PA'ANG
GRANGS KYIS MI CHOD PAS,

Therefore there exists no being who has never been my mother. Absolutely every single one of them has been my mother a countless number of times. Even the number of times that each has been my mother in just my births as a human is past all counting too.

DE LTAR SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYIS RANG GI MA GRANGS MED PA RE
YANG DANG YANG DU BYAS TSUL LA NGES SHES SHUGS DRAG MA
SKYES BAR YANG NAS YANG DU BSGOM,

Do this meditation over and over until you gain a deepfelt certainty that each and every living being has been your mother, over and over, countless times.

DE NAS DRIN DRAN TSUL LA, RANG GI TSE 'DI'I MA LA MTSON NA,

RANG AA MA'I MNGAL DU CHAGS PA NAS BZUNG STE BU LA GNOD
KYIS DOGS NAS ZAS SPYOD KHA 'DZEM PA TSUN CHAD NAD PA NANG
BZHIN GYI DKA' SPYAD LHUR BLANGS, MA RANG GI GZUGS PO NAD PA
NYAM THAG PA'I LUS LTAR GOM PA CHE BA ZHIG KYANG 'DOR MA
PHOD PAR ZLA BA DGU DANG ZHAG BCU'I RING RANG AA MA'I
MNGAL DU NYAR,

Developing a sense of gratitude is the next step, and you can start by taking your mother in this present life. She began her hardships for me while I was still in her womb, gladly taking it upon herself to avoid anything she felt might hurt me—even down to the food she ate—treating herself with care, as though she were sick. For nine months and ten days she carried me in her womb, looking at her own body as though it belonged to someone else, someone very ill, and hesitating even to take big steps.

PHYIR SKYES PA'I TSE'ANG MA RANG LA NA TSA DANG SDUG BSNGAL
TSAD MED PAS GNOD TSABS CHEN PO DE TZAM BYUNG YANG , DA
DUNG YID BZHIN GYI NOR BU RIN PO CHE RNYED PA LTAR DGA' TSOR
CHEN PO BYAS,

As she gave me birth, my mother was torn with violent suffering, excruciating pain, and yet still felt an overwhelming joy, as though she had discovered some precious gem that would grant her any wish.

RANG DE DUS NGU RGYU DANG LAG PAS G-YAB TZAM G-YAB TZAM
BYED PA LAS GZHAN GANG YANG MI SHES, CI YANG MI NUS PA'I,
LKUGS PA, ZHA BO, BYI'U PHRUG KHA DMAR LTA BU ZHIG LAS MED PA
LA AA MAS SOR MO BCU'I RTZE LA G-YENGs, SHA'I DROD LA SBYAR,
BRTZE BA'I 'DZUM GYIS BSUS,

Right then I knew absolutely nothing more than to cry and wave my arms around somehow. I was totally helpless. Totally stupid. Incapacitated. Nothing more than some baby chick with a red-rubber beak still yet to harden. But she swayed me on her fingertips, and pressed me to her body's warmth, and greeted me with a smile of love.

DGA' BA'I MIG GIS BLTAS, SNABS KHAS PHYIS, MI GTZANG BA LAG PAS
PHYIS, 'O MA'I SKYO MA SOGS KHAS BLUD, GNOD PA GANG NUS LAS
BSRUNG , PHAN PA GANG NUS BSGRUB,

With joyful eyes she gazed on me, and wiped the snot from my face with her lips, and cleaned my filthy shit with her hands. Sometimes she chewed my food for me, and fed me things like milky porridge straight from her mouth to mine. She did her best to protect me from any hurt. She did her best to get me any good.

DE DAG GI SKABS SU RANG GI SKYID SDUG LEGS NYES TSANG MA
THAMS CAD MA DE'I GDONG LA BLTAS TE MA DE GCIG PU LA RE BA
BYAS NAS SDOD DGOS PA BYUNG , RANG DE DUS AA MAS DRIN GYIS
MA BSKYANGS NA CHU TSOD GCIG KYANG MI SDOD DE, BYA DANG
KHYI SOGS KYIS ZA 'GRO BA SOGS LAS, GSON POR YONG RGYU'I RE BA
MED, RANG AA MAS NYIN RE LA YANG SROG MGO BRGYA BRGYA
TZAM BTON PA'I DRIN YOD,

In those days I had to look to her for everything; good or bad, happy or sad, all the hope I could have lay in one person: mother. But for her kindness, I wouldn't have lasted an hour; they could have set me out in the open right then and some birds or a dog would have come and made a meal of me—I'd have no hope of coming out alive. Every single day she protected me from harms that could have taken my life, no less than a hundred times. Such was her kindness.

RANG NAR SON NAS KYANG MA RANG GIS SDIG SDUG GTAM NGAN LA
MA 'DZEMS PAR BSAGS BSAGS NAS MA RANG GIS KYANG LONGS SPYAD
MA BRA BA'I RGYU NOR GANG YOD BU'I LAG TU BZHAG,

And while I was growing up she gathered together whatever I needed, avoiding no bad deed, and no suffering, and caring nothing for what other people might say of her. All the money and things she had she handed over to me, hesitating to use anything for herself.

RANG LA CHOS BYED PA'I SKAL BA YOD NA MA RANG GIS NOR RDZAS
LA PHANGS PA MED PAR MTHUN RKYEN SBYAR TE CHOS SGOR
GZHUGS PA MAN CHAD 'KHOS KA GANG YOD PAS DRIN GYIS
BSKYANGS PA LA TSAD MED,

For those of us who are fortunate enough to be practicing the monastic life, it was mother who put forth all the necessary expenses, giving without reservation, to arrange our admission into the monastery. And from that time on she supported us here, from whatever resources she had. Thus the kindness she has shown us is truly without measure.

TSE 'DI'I MAS DRIN GYIS BSKYANGS PA YANG TSE 'DI GCIG PU MA YIN
PAR, RANG GI TSE RABS SNGA MA MANG POR DRIN CHEN POS YANG
NAS YANG DU GRANGS MED PAR BSKYANGS, TSE 'DI'I MA 'DI TZAM MA
ZAD SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYANG DA LTA SKYE 'CHI 'PHOS PA'I
DBANG GIS NGO MA SHES PA MA GTOGS TSE RABS SNGA MA RNAMS SU
RANG GI MA BYAS PA'I SKABS TSE 'DI'I MAS JI LTAR DRIN GYIS
BSKYANGS PA LTAR DRIN CHEN PO'I SGO NAS BSKYANGS PA SHA STAG
YIN TE,

And this is not the only life in which my present mother has given this kindness to me. She has showered me with this kindness, great kindness, over and over, countless times, in my many lives before. And she is not the only one; every single living being has been my mother in my past lives, and during those lives cared for me no less than my present mother does—it is only my transitions from death to birth that prevent me from recognizing all these mothers now.

DPER NA DA LTA'I DUD 'GRO KHYI LA SOGS PA DANG , BYA BYU TSOS
RANG RANG GI BU LA SNYING BRTZE LUGS DANG , DRIN GYIS JI LTAR
BSKYANG LUGS LA BLTAS KYANG SHES PAR NUS GSUNGS,

Look now, concluded our Lama, at the way any common animal—a dog or bird, even the tiny sparrow—shows affection for its young, and cares for it well. From watching this we can imagine what kindness we were given too.

DRIN GZO BA NI, DE LTAR RANG LA THOG MA MED PA'I DUS NAS YANG
YANG DRIN GYIS BSKYANGS PA'I MA SEMS CAN RNAMS GONG DU
BSHAD PA'I CHU BO BZHI'I RGYUN GYIS 'KHOR BA'I RGYA MTSO CHEN
PO'I KLONG DU KHYER NAS SDUG BSNAL GSUM LA SOGS PAS RGYUN
CHAD MED PAR MNAR TE SHIN TU NYAM THAG PA LA,

The next step in gaining the wish for enlightenment is to develop a wish to repay this great kindness. So every living being is my mother, and has given me her loving care over and over endlessly, for time with no beginning. And we know from what was described above that they are being swept along by four great currents, out to sea—to the vast expanse of the ocean of cyclic life. They are tormented, without a break, by the three types of suffering, and all the other pains. Their situation is desperate.

DA LTA, BU RANG LA DE DAG 'KHOR BA'I RGYA MTSO LAS THAR BA'I

THABS BYA RGYU YOD BZHIN DU CI YANG MI SEMS PAR BSDAD NA
SHIN TU MA RABS KHREL MED THA CHAD YIN PAS NA,

And here am I, their child. Right now I have a chance to rescue them from this ocean of cyclic life. Suppose I simply sit and bide my time, and give no thought to them. This is the lowest a person could stoop—base and absolutely shameless.

DA NI SEMS CAN RANG RANG GI NGOS NAS ZAS GOS GNAS MAL RNYED
PA SOGS GNAS SKABS KYI 'KHOR BA'I BDE BA DE TZAM MA YIN PAR
MTHAR THUG GI BDE BA LA BKOD NA DRIN GZO'I MCHOG TU 'GYUR
BAS, DES NA SEMS CAN THAMS CAD BDE BA THAMS CAD DANG LDAN
PA DANG , SDUG BSNGAL THAMS CAD DANG BRAL BA ZHIG BYA DGOS
PAR 'DUG SNYAM DU BSAM,

Right now I could give them things that they would be happy to get—food, or clothes, or beds to sleep on, whatever. But these are only some temporary happiness within the circle of life. The very highest way of repaying their kindness would be to put them into the state of ultimate happiness. So let me decide within myself that every living being must come to have every happiness. And every one should be freed as well from every form of pain.

DE YANG SEMS CAN 'DI DAG LA ZAG MED KYI BDE BA TA GA LA YOD
DE, ZAG BCAS KYI BDE BA TZAM YANG MI 'DUG, SEMS CAN KHO RANG
TSOS BDE BA YIN SNYAM PA 'DI RNAMS KYANG NGO BO 'GYUR BA'I
SDUG BSNGAL SHA STAG YIN, 'DOD RGYU BDE BA 'DOD KYANG BDE BA'I
RGYUR DGE BA SGRUB MI SHES, MI 'DOD RGYU SDUG BSNGAL MI 'DOD
KYANG , SDUG BSNGAL GYI RGYU SDIG PA SPONG MI SHES, BLANG DOR
GO LOG TU SPYAD DE SDUG BSNGAL GYIS NYAM THAG PA'I MA RGAN
SEMS CAN

Right now it's absurd to say that these beings have any kind of pure happiness—they don't even have any of the impure kinds. Every single thing they think is happiness is, in its essence, nothing more than pain. They want wantables but don't want to know about doing the good deeds that bring happiness. They want no unwantables but don't want to know about giving up the bad deeds that bring pain. They act ass backwards: they do what they shouldn't and don't what they should. And so my dear aged mothers, these living beings, are made to suffer.

'DI DAG THAMS CAD BDE BA DANG BDE BA'I RGYU THAMS CAD DANG

LDAN NA CI MA RUNG , LDAN PAR GYUR CIG, LDAN PA ZHIG NGA
RANG GIS BYED, SEMS CAN THAMS CAD SDUG BSNGAL DANG SDUG
BSNGAL GYI RGYU THAMS CAD DANG BRAL NA CI MA RUNG , BRAL
BAR GYUR CIG,BRAL BA ZHIG NGA RANG GIS BYED SNYAM DU YANG
YANG BSGOMS PAS BYAMS PA DANG SNYING RJE SHUGS CAN BSKYED,

"How good it would be if they could all find every happiness, and
every cause of happiness. I wish they could. I'll see that they do."

"How good it would be if they could all be free of every pain, and
every cause of pain. I wish they could. I'll see that they do."

Let these two trains of thought run through your mind; meditate on them over
and over again. Then you will come to feel the very strongest loving-kindness
and compassion.

YANG KHA CIG LA, SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYI KHUR RANG GIS BYED
MI DGOS TE, SEMS CAN 'DREN MKHAN SANGS RGYAS BYANG SEMS
MANG PO YOD SNYAM PA LTA BU 'BYUNG SRID KYANG DE NI SHIN TU
MA RABS KHREL MED THA CHAD YIN PAS DE 'DRA BSAM PA GTAN NAS
MI RUNG STE, DPER NA TSE 'DI'I RANG GI MA'I BKRES SKOM SOGS KYI
SDUG BSNGAL SEL BA'I THABS BU GZHAN GYIS BYAS NA YANG , RANG
LA DRIN GYIS BSKYANGS PA'I DRIN LAN GZO BA'I KHUR DE RANG NYID
LA BAB PA BZHIN DU,

Some people might come up with the idea that "Why should I take upon myself
this great load, of every living being? There are plenty of Buddhas and
bodhisattvas around to guide them on their way." This kind of thought though is
absolutely improper. It's base. It's shameless. It's as if your mother in this life was
hungry, and parched, and you expected someone else's child to go and give her
food and drink. But it's you for whom she has cared, and the responsibility of
paying her back has fallen only to you.

RANG LA SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYIS THOG MA MED PA NAS MA LAN
GRANGS MANG PO BYAS SHING , DE DAG GI SKABS THAMS CAD DU TSE
'DI'I MA LTAR DRIN CHEN PO'I SGO NAS BSKYANGS PA SHA STAG YIN
PAS, DE'I DRIN LAN GZO BA NI SANGS RGYAS BYANG SEMS GZHAN SU
LA'ANG KHAG MI 'KHRI BAR RANG GCIG PU'I KHUR DU BABS PAS NA,

It's the same with all these living beings, who for beginningless time have served

as my mother so many times, and who in each of these times cared for me in every way with the kindness of this present mother. Returning their kindness is no business of anyone else at all, not for some Buddha or bodhisattva—it is my responsibility, and only mine.

SEMS CAN BDE BA DANG LDAN PA DANG SDUG BSNGAL DANG BRAL
BAR BYED MKHAN DE'ANG GZHAN LA RAG MA LAS PAR SEMS CAN
THAMS CAD BDE BA THAMS CAD DANG LDAN PA YANG NGA RANG
GCIG BUS BYED, SDUG BSNGAL THAMS CAD DANG BRAL BA YANG NGA
RANG GCIG PUS BYED, BLA MA SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG LA'ANG
NGA RANG GCIG PUS BKOD SNYAM PA'I LHAG PA'I BSAM PA SHUGS
DRAG TU BSGOM,

So someone is going to do it—to make sure every sentient being has every happiness, and never a single pain. It is going to be myself; I'll rely on no one else. I by myself will see to it that every single being comes to have every single happiness. And I by myself will see to it that every single being gets free of every single pain. I will by myself put them into the state of the Lama, the state of Buddhahood. Meditate strongly on these thoughts; they are the step we call the "extraordinary form of personal responsibility."

DE LTA BU'I SEMS BSKYED NA'ANG DA LTA NI RANG LA SEMS CAN
THAMS CAD LTA ZHOG, SEMS CAN GCIG TZAM 'DREN PA'I NUS PA
YANG MI 'DUG, 'O NA DE LTA BU'I NUS PA DE SU LA YOD CE NA, DE NI
YANG DAG PAR RDZOGS PA'I SANGS RGYAS NYAG GCIG LA YOD PA MA
GTOGS GZHAN SU LA'ANG MED, RANG GIS KYANG SANGS RGYAS KYI
GO 'PHANG DE THOB NA DON GNYIS MTHAR PHYIN TE SKU GSUNG
THUGS KYI 'OD ZER RE RES KYANG SEMS CAN GRANGS MED PA'I DON
BYA BAR NUS PAS,

I may be able to develop this noble intention, but the fact is that I'm completely incapable of leading a single being to Buddhahood—much less every one of them. Who then has the capacity? This power is had by a fully enlightened Buddha—only by him, and by no one else at all. If I can reach the same state, I will by definition have brought both mine and others' benefit to its perfection. And then every single ray of light that emanates from me, whether it be an action of my body, or my speech, or my thoughts, will have the power to accomplish the ends of countless sentient beings.

DES NA SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYI DON DU SANGS RGYAS KYI GO

'PHANG DE NYID DUS MYUR BA NYID DU THOB PA ZHIG CI NAS KYANG
BYA SNYAM DU BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS BCOS MA MA YIN PA BSKYED,

And so, for the sake of every living being, I will do anything I can to achieve this one great goal—the state of a Buddha—with every speed. Think this way to yourself, and do anything you can to develop the genuine wish to reach enlightenment for every living being.

BYANG SEMS SBYANG SKABS SANGS RGYAS THOB NA DE'I ZHOR DU
RANG DON YANG 'BAD MED DU 'BYUNG BAR BSAM NA THEG DMAN DU
MI LHUNG BA'I GNAD YOD PAR RJE'I LAM RIM DU GSUNGS YOD GSUNG
,

While you practice these meditations to develop the wish for enlightenment, you can also reflect that—when you achieve Buddhahood—you will by the way automatically gain everything you need for yourself as well. Our Lama mentioned that this point was stated in Lord Tsongkapa's exposition on the Steps of the path as being very helpful in preventing a person from slipping to the lesser way.[134]

RGYU 'BRAS MAN NGAG BDUN GYI DANG PO GSUM NI SNYING RJE
CHEN PO'I GZHI SGRUB PA YIN, YID 'ONG GI BYAMS PA NI DE GSUM GYI
'BRAS BUR 'ONG BAS DMIGS PA LOGS SU SKYONG TSUL MED KYANG ,
DE'I TSAB TU SEMS CAN THAMS CAD BDE BA DANG LDAN 'DOD KYI
BYAMS PA BSGOM DGOS,

The first three of the seven parts in this cause-and-effect instruction provide a foundation for great compassion. The "beautiful" form of loving-kindness comes out as a result of these three, so there is no separate meditation instruction for it.[135] One must though in its place meditate upon the loving-kindness where you wish that every being gain every happiness.

BYAMS PA DE DANG , SNYING RJE, LHAG BSAM GSUM NI GZHAN DON
DON GNYER GYI BLO YIN, SEMS BSKYED DNGOS NI DE DAG GI 'BRAS BU
YIN, LAM RIM YANG SKYES BU CHUNG 'BRING GI LAM NI SEMS SKYE
BA'I SNGON 'GRO DANG , BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SGOM TSUL NI DNGOS
GZHI, MJUG SPYOD PA'I SKOR RNAMS DE'I BSLAB BYA YIN,

This loving-kindness, as well as compassion and the extraordinary type of personal responsibility, are all forms of an attitude of striving for the welfare of

others. The actual wish for enlightenment is their result. The works on the Steps of the path themselves have a similar structure. The paths for people of lesser and medium scopes represent a preliminary to developing the wish for enlightenment. The teaching on how to meditate on this great wish is the main stage. In conclusion then come the sections on bodhisattva deeds—advices in acting out the wish.

BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SBYONG BA'I SKABS SU SEMS BSKYED NYER
GNYIS DANG , SMON 'JUG SOGS KYI NGO BO KHYAD PAR RNAMS SHES
PAR BYAS TE BLO SBYANG DGOS,

When you're practicing to develop this wish for enlightenment, you should train your mind in its basic nature and all its various attributes: these include the twenty-two forms of the wish, the distinction between praying and actually engaging, and so on.[136]

BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS RIN PO CHE 'DI NI RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB
THAMS CAD KYI SNYING PO DANG , RGYAL SRAS BYANG CHUB SEMS
DPA' THAMS CAD KYI THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL GCIG PU YIN TE, SPYOD
'JUG LAS,

This precious jewel, the wish to gain enlightenment for every being, is the inner essence of all the high teachings of the victorious Buddhas. It is the single centermost contemplation of every one of their sons—the bodhisattvas. As *The Bodhisattva's Life* relates,

,DAM CHOS 'O MA BSRUBS PA LAS,
,MAR GYI NYING KHU PHYUNG BA YIN,

It's the purest essence of the butter
Churned from the milk of the holy word.

,ZHES DANG ,
,BSKAL PA DU MAR RAB DGONGS MDZAD PA YI,
,THUB DBANG RNAMS KYIS 'DI NYID PHAN PAR GZIGS,

We see too,
Many eons the Able Lords considered,
And found but this to be of benefit.[137]

,ZHEŚ DANG , 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN POS KYANG , SEMS
BSKYED THEG MCHOĞ LAM GYI GZHUNG SHING STE,, ZHEŚ PA NAS, DE
LTAR SHES NAS RGYAL SRAS DPA' BO RNAMS, , RIN CHEN SEMS MCHOĞ
THUGS DAM MTHIL DU MDZAD, , CES GSUNGS, RJE THAMS CAD
MKHYEN PAS BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS RIN PO CHE 'DI KHO NA MA
GTOGS GZHAN GANG LA'ANG THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL DU MA GSUNGS
PAS, RANG CAG KYANG THEG PA CHEN PO BA ZHIG BYED 'DOD NA
BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LA NYAMS LEN GYI MTHIL DU BYA DGOS,

Our gentle protector, the great Tsongkapa, has as well composed the lines that
begin with "Center beam of the highest way, the wish..." and conclude with
"...Bodhisattva princes, knowing this, / Keep the high jewel wish their center
practice." [138] It was only this precious wish for enlightenment, and nothing else
at all, that the all-knowing Lord ever described as the "center practice." Therefore
those of us who wish to become followers of the greater way must make the wish
for enlightenment our very centermost practice.

DENG SANG THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL GANG LA BYED CES DRIS NA YI
DAM ZHIG LA BYED ZER BA LAS, BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LA BYED ZER
MKHAN PHAR ZHOG, BYANG SEMS 'DI LA THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL DU
BYED DGOS PAR SHES MKHAN YANG DKON PAR 'DUG,

Nowadays when you go up to someone and ask him what his very most
important practice is, he'll tell you he's meditating on one of those powerful
tutelary deities. You don't meet people who say their chief practice is meditating
on the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being. Much less, for in
fact it's quite difficult to find anyone who even realizes that he should make this
wish his centermost practice.

KHA SHAS KYIS THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL DE BSANGS DANG , GSER
SKYEM DANG , KHA MCHU NAG PO ZHI BAR BYED PA'I GZUNGS, NYES
PA KUN SEL, LUG GZUNGS, RTA GZUNGS, NOR GZUNGS, BAR CHAD
LAM SEL, RGYA NAG SKAG BZLOG, MI KHA DGRA BSGYUR SOGS LA
BYED, DE LA BLTOS NA YI DAM GYI LHA TSAD LDAN RE LA THUGS DAM
GYI MTHIL DU BYED ZER BA DE YANG DGA' RAB YIN,

We see people making all different sorts of things their central practice: the
Elimination Ritual for getting rid of bad spirits, the Golden Tea offering, the Spell
for Ending Evil Litigation, the ritual they call Stopping All Harms, the Sheep
Spell, the Horse Spell, the Money Spell, the ritual for No More Problems, the

ritual for Stopping Bad Luck at the End of the Twelve-Year Cycle, the ritual for Preventing the Praise that Others Give You from Turning to a Curse, and on and on. These are all so bad that they make it look pretty good when a person can say he's making a central practice out of anything at all associated with some authentic tutelary deity.[139]

YANG LUNG PA KHA CIG TU, MNA' BSHAGS RIN CHEN PHRENG BA DANG , SDIG BSHAGS GSER GYI SPU GRI , KHYI MDO, SPYANG MDO, WA MDO, DRED MDO, SBRUL MDO ZER BA SOGS GANG DRAN DRAN BYAS PA LTA BU DE 'DRA DAR SROL 'DUG KYANG , DE TSO LA KHUNGS RNAM DAG YOD PA GTAN NAS MA MTHONG ZHING ,

We also see a number of works gaining some popularity in different localities that seem to be just anything somebody could think up: the String of Jewels for those Bound by Blood, the Blade of Gold for Confessing Sins, the so-called "Dog Sutra," the so-called "Wolf Sutra," the so-called "Fox Sutra," the so-called "Bear Sutra," the so-called "Snake Sutra," and all the rest. We find though absolutely no legitimate origin for any of these works.

GAL TE SDIG BSHAGS SU BTON RGYU ZHIG NGES PAR DGOS NA'ANG DPE CHA BRDZUN MA, NGAL BA DON MED DE 'DRAS LAG MI THOGS PAR PHUNG PO GSUM PA'I MDO DANG , SMAN BLA'I MDO, THAR PA CHEN PO'I MDO, MDO SDE BSKAL BZANG LA SOGS PA RGYAL BAS MDO RGYUD RNAMS SU MANG DU GSUNGS PA'I TSAD LDAN KHUNGS DAG DE 'DRA LA KLOG 'DON BYED DGOS GSUNGS,

If you really do need a text to use for confessing your bad deeds, you should stop wasting your time with fake scriptures and meaningless efforts like these. The Victors have, in all their open and secret teachings, given us more than enough appropriate works: the *Three Heaps Sutra*, the *Sublime Medicine Sutra*, the *Sutra of the Great Freedom*, the *Sutra of the Eon of Fortune*, and others of the like.[140] It is texts like these, our Lama told us, authoritative texts with a legitimate origin, that we must use for our study and recitations.

YANG 'GA' SHAS KYI SEMS LA, BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LOS YOD, CHO GA'I 'GOR SANGS RGYAS CHOS TSOGS MA BTON NAS SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYI DON DU SANGS RGYAS THOB PAR SHOG CIG SNYAM PA DE YIN BSAM YANG DE NI BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LA YID SMON BYAS PA TZAM DANG , SMON LAM BTAB PA TZAM LAS DNGOS MA YIN TE, DE YIN NA DGE SBYOR BYED KHUL BYAS PA GZHAN DANG GZHAN LAS KYANG

BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LAS SLA SHOS SU SNANG BA'I PHYIR RO, , DE
LTAR NA BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS NI GONG DU BSHAD PA LTAR BLO RIM
GYIS SBYANGS TE SKYE DGOS PA YIN GSUNGS,

Now there are also some people around who think to themselves, "But I do have the wish for enlightenment. After all, at the beginning of all my devotions I recite the 'Buddha-Dharma-Sangha' prayer[141] and think about achieving Buddhahood so I could help every living being." This though is just expressing a hope that you gain the wish for enlightenment—it's just making a prayer about the wish. It's not the actual wish itself. If it were, then developing the wish to achieve Buddhahood would have to be the very easiest of all the many practices of virtue we are supposedly trying to do. And so, concluded our Lama, we must rather gain this true wish by putting our minds through the training described above—one by one through each of the steps, in order.

XIII. How to Know When You've Found the Wish for Enlightenment

GSUM PA SEMS DE SKYES PA'I TSAD NI, SGOM RIM DANG PO LAS
GSUNGS PA LAM RIM CHE CHUNG SOGS LAS ZHIB TU GSAL ZHING ,
MDOR BSDU NA, SHIN TU GCES PA'I BU ME DONG DU LHUNG BA'I MA
DES, BU YIS SDUG BSNGAL MYONG BA LA SKAD CIG KYANG MI BZOD
PAR BU ME DONG NAS 'DON PA LA SHIN TU RINGS PA LTAR,

This brings us to the third and final section in our explanation of the wish for enlightenment: how to know when you've finally developed it. This point is covered with great detail in various works, including both the more extensive and the briefer presentations on the Steps of the path to enlightenment, which at this point employ material from the first of the *Stages of Meditation*. [142] To put it briefly, suppose a mother has watched her beloved child slip down into a pit of red-hot coals. The fire is searing his body. She cannot stand to see it go on for a single second. She throws herself forward to pull the child out.

MA RGAN SEMS CAN RNAMS 'KHOR BA DANG NGAN SONG GI SDUG
BSNGAL BZOD GLAGS MED PAS MNAR BA LA SKAD CIG KYANG MI
BZOD PAR, SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYI DON DU RDZOGS PA'I SANGS
RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG MYUR BA NYID DU THOB 'DOD KYI BLO BCOS
MA MA YIN PA ZHIG SKYES NA BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SKYES PA'I TSAD
YIN GSUNGS,

All the living creatures of the universe, all our dear mothers, are burning in the same way, in the unbearable pain of the three lower realms, and the circle of life in general. When we cannot stand to see it go on for a single second more, when we finally feel the true wish to reach total enlightenment, immediately, for the sake of every living being, well then—our Lama concluded—you can say you have gained the wish for enlightenment.

Notes to Reading Eight

[130.] *Even just wishing...* Quotation on f. 3a of this textbook for bodhisattvas (entry 71).

[131.] *Were the merit of the wish...* Quotation from f. 352b of this teaching of the Buddha himself (entry 11).

[132.] *Loving-Gaze:* The divine form of the Buddha that represents all his compassion. The practice mentioned can be learned from a qualified lama.

[133.] *Commentary on Valid Perception:* Famed treatise which forms the basis for the study of formal logic in Buddhist monasteries. It was composed by Master Dharmakirti (c. 630 A.D.) in explanation of the *Compendium on Valid Perception* written by Master Dignaga (c. 450 A.D.), great forefather of the Buddhist logic traditions. The reasoning mentioned is found in the second chapter, the "Proof of Infallibility," beginning from line 142 (ff. 108b-109a, entry 22).

[134.] *preventing a person from slipping:* Some discussions of these benefits appear in Lord Tsongkapa's work on ff. 182-6 and 189 (entry 61).

[135.] *"beautiful" form of loving-kindness:* Means to see every other living creature as beautiful or beloved as one's only child; this loving-kindness is distinguished from the one mentioned next.

[136.] *twenty-two forms of the wish:* These metaphors are found on f. 2b of the *Jewel of Realizations* (see note 69). Here the wish for enlightenment is compared to earth, gold, the first day's moon, fire, a mine, a cache of gemstones, the ocean, a diamond, the king of mountains, medicine, a spiritual guide, a wish-giving jewel, the sun, a song, a king, a treasure, a highway, a riding horse, a fountain of water, a sweet sound, a river, and a cloud. Each metaphor stands for the wish at a different level of realization; the venerable Lama of Chone, Drakpa Shedrup (1675-1748) gives a concise explanation of them in his commentary (pp. 45-6, entry 13).

The distinction between "praying" for and "engaging" in the wish for enlightenment is described as the difference between wanting to go somewhere and then actually stepping along with the resolve to reach the goal. In the latter case one has taken the formal vows for the wish and is acting with the conscious intention of attaining enlightenment for all living beings. See pp. 109-110 of entry

31, the commentary to the *Jewel* by Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), a renowned scholar from Pabongka Rinpoche's own Sera Mey College.

[137.] *Many eons the Able Lords...* This quotation found on f. 2a; the preceding reference is on f. 7b (entry 71).

[138.] *Center beam of the highest way...* Again from the very brief version of his *Steps on the Path* (p. 310, entry 63). The entire context reads as follows:

Center beam of the highest way, the wish;
Foundation, support for those of mighty deeds;
Alchemist elixir for turning both the collections;
Gold mine of merit, full of a mass of good.
Bodhisattva princes, knowing this,
Keep the high jewel wish their center practice.

The "two collections" are the accumulations of knowledge and virtue which produce the bodies of a Buddha (see note 32).

[139.] *the Elimination Ritual, etc.:* We have not located the spurious texts listed.

[140.] *Three Heaps Sutra, etc.:* These four teachings of the Buddha himself are listed at entries 39, 21, 33, and 10 respectively.

[141.] *Buddha-Dharma-Sangha prayer:* A traditional prayer for refuge and developing the wish for enlightenment. It reads,

I go for refuge, until I reach enlightenment,
To the Buddha, Dharma, and the highest Sangha.
By the merit of giving and other goods deeds I do
May I become a Buddha to help all living beings.

The Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are explained in note 110.

[142.] *Stages of Meditation:* The point is discussed by Lord Tsongkapa at ff. 89-92 of his shorter *Steps on the Path* (entry 60), and ff. 191-202 in his longer version (entry 61). Here a number of times he quotes the *Stages of Meditation*, a treatise in three parts by the eighth-century Buddhist master Kamalashila (entry 1). Kamalashila is best known for his successful defense of the Indian Buddhist teaching of analytical meditation before the Tibetan king Trisong Detsen. His

opponents were Chinese monks who wrongly asserted that meditating on nothing at all would be of any benefit.

The Key that Unlocks the Door to the Noble Path (Lam bzang sgo 'byed) written by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-91), a commentary upon the *Three Principal Paths (Lam-gtzo rnam-gsum)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), folios 29a-35a.

THE THIRD PATH: CORRECT VIEW

XIV. Why You Need Correct View

GSUM PA YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA BSHAD PA LA LNGA LAS, DANG PO
LTA BA BSGOM DGOS PA'I RGYU MTSAN NI,

We have now reached the third of the four parts of the body of the text: the explanation of correct view. Here there are five sections; the first, which explains why you need to meditate on correct view, is expressed in the next verse of the root text:

,GNAS LUGS RTOGS PA'I SHES RAB MI LDAN NA,
,NGES 'BYUNG BYANG CHUB SEMS LA GOMS BYAS KYANG ,
,SRID PA'I RTZA BA GCOD PAR MI NUS PAS,
,DE PHYIR RTEN 'BREL RTOGS PA'I THABS LA 'BAD,
,CES PA 'DIS BSTAN,

(9)

**You may master renunciation and the wish,
But unless you have the wisdom perceiving reality
You cannot cut the root of cyclic life.
Make efforts in ways then to perceive interdependence.**

DE YANG ZAB MO DE KHO NA NYID KYI LTA BA'AM GNAS LUGS DON
DAM BDEN PA RTOGS PA'I SHES RAB DANG MI LDAN NA, NGES 'BYUNG
BYANG SEMS SOGS THABS KYI CHA LA JI TZAM 'BAD KYANG BDAG
'DZIN GYI DNGOS GNYEN DU MI 'GRO BAS SRID PA'I RTZA BA BDAG
'DZIN GCOD PAR MI NUS,

What the verse is saying is this: "Unless you have that very profound correct view about suchness—unless you have the wisdom that perceives reality, or ultimate truth—you can strive to perfect renunciation and the wish for enlightenment (along with all the other 'method' practices) as much as you please; but you cannot cut the root of cyclic life, grasping to a 'self,' since these

practices alone do not act as a direct antidote for your grasping."

DER MA ZAD ZAB MO'I LTA BA MED NA NGES 'BYUNG DANG BYANG
SEMS GNYIS RKYANG PAS NI THEG CHEN TSOGS LAM MAN CHAD LAS,
DE YAN CHAD RNAMS 'THOB PAR MI NUS PA DANG , THEG DMAN YIN
NA THEG DMAN GYI SBYOR LAM YANG MI 'THOB,

And that's not all. A person without this profound view may be able to attain various levels on up to the first of the five paths of the greater way, the "accumulation" path, by force of renunciation and the wish for enlightenment alone. But he can never go any further. And if he is a follower of the lesser way he cannot even reach the second of its paths, the path of "preparation." [143]

DE GNYIS KYIS ZIN PA'I STENG DU ZAB MO'I LTA BA ZHIG RTOGS NA
THEG CHEN SBYOR LAM YAN GYIS LAM RNAMS KYANG 'THOB NUS PA
DANG , THAR PA DANG THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA'I RGYUR 'GRO BA LA
KHYAD ZHUGS PA YIN,

Suppose though that your mind is completely filled with thoughts of renunciation and the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being, and then in addition you open your eyes to this profound view. Now you can achieve all the various levels and paths of the greater way, from its second path (also called "preparation") on up. Then too the things you do take on a very special power, to bring about for you the states of freedom and all-knowing.

RANG CAG GIS 'GRO BA SGROL BAR KHAS BLANGS PA LA SGROL BA'I
THABS SHIG MED NA BSAM PA BZANG BA TZAM ZHIG LAS MI YONG
BAS THOG MAR 'KHOR BA'I RTZA BA GCOD BYED ZAB MO'I LTA BA PHU
THAG CHOD PA ZHIG AE RNYED BLTA DGOS, LAS 'BRAS NGES PA'I 'JIG
RTEN PA'I YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA TZAM GYIS MI PHAN, DE YANG
MTHAR GTUGS NA BDAG MED PAR RTOGS PA'I LTA BA 'DI LA THUG,

All of us sitting here have decided that we will take it upon ourselves to liberate living beings. But unless we find some actual way of liberating them, this will never be more than some noble intent. Thus at the very start we have to gain an outlook that says, "I am going to go and find the final form of that profound view that cuts the root of cyclic life." Now there is a kind of correct view that we call the "worldly" type; with it, you perceive the laws of actions and their consequences. This view alone though is not enough. It too, by the way, is ultimately tied to the view with which you realize that no self exists.

BDAG MED RTOGS PA'I LTA BA 'DI MED PAR PHYI ROL PA KHA CIG TING
NGE 'DZIN BSGOMS TE BSAM GZUGS BRGYAD KA THOB NA'ANG NYON
MONGS SPONG BA LTA CI, NYON MONGS PA KHA PHRI BA TZAM YANG
MA BYUNG STE, MDO TING NGE 'DZIN GYI RGYAL PO LAS,

Certain non-Buddhist sages can put themselves into a deep, single-pointed state of meditation—and they attain all eight levels of concentration and formlessness.[144] But they lack the view with which you realize no self exists, and fail therefore even to reduce their harmful emotions slightly—much less to eliminate them. As the sutra called *King of Concentration* says,

,JIG RTEN DAG NI TING 'DZIN SGOM BYED KYANG ,
,DES NI BDAG TU 'DU SHES 'JIG MI BYED,
,DES NI NYON MONGS PHYIR ZHING RAB 'KHRUG STE,
,LHAG SPYOD KYIS NI TING 'DZIN 'DIR BSGOMS BZHIN,
,ZHES GSUNGS PA RED,

The worldly meditate on concentration
But it doesn't destroy their concept of a self.
This feeds their unhealthy thoughts, stirs them up,
And ends like the meditation of Udraka.[145]

DE'I PHYIR 'KHOR BA'I RTZA BA BDAG 'DZIN GCOD PA LA NGES PAR
BDAG MED PA'I LTA BA DGOS TE, DE NYID LAS,

Our tendency to grasp to some "self" is the very root of our circling life. To cut this root we absolutely must gain the view that perceives that no such self exists. As the same work says,

,GAL TE CHOS LA BDAG MED SO SOR RTOG
,SO pSOR DE BRTAGS GAL TE SGOM PA NI,
,DE NI MYA NGAN 'DAS THOB 'BRAS BU'I RGYU,
,RGYU GZHAN GANG YIN DES NI ZHIR MI 'GYUR,

Suppose you analyze, see the no-self of things,
And suppose you meditate on what you've seen;
It leads you to the result of gaining nirvana—
Nothing else can lead you to this peace.

CES GSUNGS PA LTAR THAR PA THOB PA LA BDAG TU 'DZIN PA RTZA
BA NAS SPANG DGOS, DE SPONG BA LA BDAG 'DZIN DANG 'DZIN
STANGS DNGOS 'GAL DU GYUR PA'I LAM BDAG MED BSGOM DGOS,
BDAG MED BSGOM PA 'DI MED NA SBYIN PA GTONG BA DANG TSUL
KHRIMS BSRUNG BA SOGS JI 'DRA ZHIG LA 'BAD KYANG THAR PA 'THOB
PAR MI NUS TE, BZHI BRGYA PA LAS, ZHI SGO GNYIS PA YOD MA YIN, ,
ZHES GSUNGS, DES NA 'KHOR BA LAS THAR BA LA BDAG MED RTOGS
PA'I SHES RAB 'DI MED THABS MED PA YIN,

To win freedom you must eliminate, from its root, this grasping to a "self." To eliminate it, you must meditate on how nothing has a self: you must find a path or mental viewpoint which holds things in a way that is completely incompatible with the way you now grasp for a "self." You can make any great efforts you want in practices like charity and morality, but without this meditation on no-self you will never be able to attain freedom. As the *400 Verses* says, "There is no second door to peace." [146] This wisdom which perceives that no self exists is then a "without which nothing" for freeing yourself from the circle of life.

DE GCIG PUS KYANG MI CHOG BAR THABS SNYING RJE YANG MED
THABS MED PAS THABS SHES YA MA BRAL BA ZHIG NGES PAR DGOS,
DRI MA MED PAR GRAGS PAS BSTAN PA'I MDO LAS,

Wisdom though is not enough by itself either. Compassion too is a "without which nothing." And this is why we say you must have both "method" and "wisdom," never one without the other. As we read in the *Sutra of Vimalakirti*,

,THABS KYIS MA ZIN PA'I SHES RAB NI 'CHING BA'O,
,THABS KYIS ZIN PA'I SHES RAB NI THAR PA'O,
,SHES RAB KYIS MA ZIN PA'I THABS NI 'CHING BA'O,
,SHES RAB KYIS ZIN PA'I THABS NI THAR PA'O, ,

Wisdom not steeped in method is bondage.

Wisdom steeped in method is freedom.

Method not steeped in wisdom is bondage.

Method steeped in wisdom is freedom. [147]

ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR, 'BRAS BU CHOS GZUGS KYI SKU GNYIS THOB PA
LA'ANG THABS SHES YA MA BRAL BA'I SGO NAS TSOGS GNYIS ZUNG
'BREL DU BSAGS PA NGES PAR DGOS TE, DPAL MGON 'PHAGS PA KLU
SGRUB KYIS,

The result we want to achieve is the two bodies of an enlightened being: the "dharma body" and the "form body." To get them, we must gather together a perfect union of two great masses of goodness. To do this we must rely on method and wisdom, one always with the other. As our glorious savior, the realized being Nagarjuna, has written:

,DGE BA 'DI YIS SKYE BO KUN,
,BSOD NAMS YE SHES TSOGS RDZOGS SHING ,
,BSOD NAMS YE SHES LAS BYUNG BA'I,
,DAM PA GNYIS NI THOB PAR SHOG CES DANG ,

By this virtue may all beings
Gather the masses of merit and wisdom.
May they achieve the ultimate two
That the merit and the wisdom produce.[148]

DPAL LDAN ZLA BAS KYANG ,
,KUN RDZOB DE NYID GSHOG YANGS DKAR PO RGYAS GYUR PA,
,NGANG PA'I RGYAL PO DE NI SKYE BO'I NGANG PA YIS,
,MDUN DU BDAR NAS DGE BA'I RLUNG GI SHUGS STOB KYIS,
,RGYAL BA'I YON TAN RGYA MTSO'I PHA ROL MCHOG TU 'GRO,

The illustrious Chandrakirti has said as well,
On vast wide-spreading wings of both
the conventional and the real
The king goose flies on at the
center point in the formation
Of the other geese, all beings, spurred
by the wind of virtue,
Reaching to the farthest shore of the ocean
of Victors' qualities.[149]

ZHES KUN RDZOB NI THABS BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS DANG , DE NYID
CES PA SHES RAB YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA STE, DPER NA BYA GSHOG PA
GNYIS LDAN NAM MKHA' LA THOGS MED DU 'GRO BA LTAR, RGYAL
BA'I YON TAN YONGS SU RDZOGS PA'I PHA ROL TU BGROD PA LA
BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS DANG YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA'I THABS SHES
GNYIS YA MA BRAL BA DGOS PA LAS, THABS SHES YA BRAL BYA GSHOG
CHAG LTA BUS BGROD PAR MI NUS GSUNGS,

Here the word "conventional" refers to "method"; that is, the wish to achieve enlightenment for every sentient being. "Reality" refers to "wisdom"—meaning correct view. A great bird with both wings complete can soar unimpeded in the sky; just so, a person who wants to travel to that farthest shore where he possesses each and every good quality of the victorious Buddhas must have method and wisdom—the wish for enlightenment and correct view—and he must have them both together. A person who has one without the other is like a bird with a broken wing. He cannot make the journey.

'O NA LTA BA DE JI 'DRA BYAS NAS BSGOM SNYAM NA, DE YANG GANG
BYUNG GIS MI CHOG PAR BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYI BKA' TSAD MA NGES
DON STON PA'I MDO SDE ZHIG GI RJES SU 'BRANG DGOS, SPYIR DRANG
NGES KYI DON LA NGES DON NI MTHAR THUG GI DON DE GA RANG DU
GNAS PA DANG , DRANG DON NI DON DE MTHAR THUG GI DON LA MI
GNAS PA LA BYED, DRANG NGES KYI MDO YANG DON DAM BDEN PA
BSTAN BYA'I GTZO BOR BYAS NAS BSTAN PA NGES DON GYI MDO DANG
, DE LAS GZHAN PA'I MDO RNAMS DRANG DON GYI MDO YIN,

"How then do I gain this view?" you may ask. Not just anything will do: you must rather follow one of the scriptures taught by the enlightened Conquerors—a true teaching, and one which treats the "literal." Generally speaking, we draw the distinction between "literal" and "figurative" as follows: something is "literal" when its nature actually lies in the ultimate, and something is "figurative" when its nature does not lie in the ultimate. "Literal" scriptures then are those that deal chiefly with ultimate truth, while other types of scriptures we call "figurative."

DRANG NGES KYI MDO'I DGONGS PA'ANG PAndI TA SU RUNG RUNG GIS
'GREL BAR MI NUS PAS, NGES DON GYI DGONGS PA 'GREL BAR RGYAL
BA RANG NYID KYIS LUNG BSTAN PA LTAR MGON PO KLU SGRUB KYIS
BLO GROS MI ZAD PA'I MDO LA BR TEN TE RTZA BA SHES RAB SOGS DBU
MA RIGS TSOGS KYI SGO NAS NGES DON ZAB MO'I LTA BA RGYAL BA'I
DGONGS PA LTAR SROL PHYE BAR MDZAD,

Not every ancient sage was capable of clarifying the true meaning of the literal and figurative scriptures. For commenting on the true intent of the "literal" it took the savior Nagarjuna, as foretold by the Buddhas themselves. He was able to introduce an entire system clarifying the "literal" and profound view just as the victorious Buddhas intended it. He did so through the *Root Wisdom* and other works in his famed "Collection on the Reasoning of the Middle Way," basing

them all on the scripture known as *Understanding that Has No End*. [150]

DE'I RJES SU SLOB DPON SANGS RGYAS BSKYANGS KYIS BU{ddh} P'A LI
TA DANG , 'PHAGS PA LHAS DBU MA BZHI BRGYA PA SOGS MDZAD,
LHAG PAR SLOB DPON ZLA BA GRAGS PAS 'PHAGS PA KLU SGRUB KYI
DGONGS PA BZHIN DU RTZA SHE'I TSIG LA 'JUG PA TSIG GSAL DANG ,
DON LA 'JUG PA DBU MA LA 'JUG PA SOGS MDZAD,

Later on came the masters Buddhapalita, author of the commentary that bears his name, and Aryadeva—who composed the *400 Verses on the Middle Way* and other titles. Most especially there was Master Chandrakirti who, following the intent of the realized being Nagarjuna, wrote various works including *A Clarification of the Words* (which explains the wording of Master Nagarjuna's *Root Wisdom*) and *Entering the Middle Way* (which enters into the meaning of the *Root*). [151]

DE DAG GI DGONGS PA PHYIN CI MA LOG PAR 'KHRUL PA'I DRI MA
CUNG ZAD KYANG MED PAR BOD GANGS CAN GYI LJONGS 'DIR GSAL
BAR MDZAD PA NI 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO KHO NA MA
GTOGS GZHAN SU YANG MA BYUNG BAS, RANG CAG RNAMS 'PHAGS
MCHOG KLU SGRUB YAB SRAS KYI LUGS BZANG , RJE THAMS CAD
MKHYEN PA'I LEGS BSHAD RMAD DU BYUNG BA'I GZHUNG CHEN MO
RNAMS LA BR TEN DGOS TE, 'JUG PA LAS,

Here in the Land of Snows, in Tibet, it was the gentle protector Tsongkapa—and no one else but him—who was able to elucidate the true meaning of these works with absolute accuracy, without the slightest taint of error. Thus you and I should follow the excellent system of that highest of realized beings, Nagarjuna, and his spiritual sons; we should rely on the great textbooks of the omniscient Lord Tsongkapa, on his high and wondrous words. As *Entering the Middle Way* states,

,SLOB DPON KLU SGRUB LUGS KYI LAM LAS NI,
,PHYI ROL GYUR LA ZHI BA'I THABS MED DO,
,DE DAG KUN RDZOB DE NYID BDEN LAS NYAMS,
,DE LAS NYAMS PAS THAR PA GRUB YOD MIN,
,ZHES DANG ,

There's no way to peace for people who've
stepped from the path

Of the system taught by the Master Nagarjuna.
They've lost the truths, the conventional
and the real;
Those who've lost the truths cannot be free.[152]

,MNYAM MED JO BO CHEN POS KYANG ,
,KLU SGRUB SLOB MA ZLA GRAGS YIN,
,DE LAS BRGYUD PA'I MAN NGAG GIS,
,CHOS NYID BDEN PA RTOGS PAR 'GYUR,

,ZHES GSUNGS, DES NA ZAB MO'I LTA BA 'DI MDO SNGAGS GNYIS KA LA
MED THABS MED PA YIN,

The matchless Lord Atisha has said as well:
Nagarjuna's student was Chandrakirti;
The instructions handed down from them
Bring you to see reality, truth.[153]

You can see then that this profound viewpoint on things is indispensable for
both the open and the secret teachings.

SPYIR RGYA GAR 'PHAGS PA'I YUL DU GRUB MTHA' SMRA BA BZHI
BYUNG BA LAS, RANG SDE BYE SMRA GNAS MA BU PAS RTAG GCIG
RANG DBANG CAN GYI BDAG DE DGAG BYAR 'DOD, BYE BRAG SMRA BA
GZHAN DANG MDO SDE PAS RANG SKYA THUB PA'I RDZAS YOD KYIS
GRUB PA DE DGAG BYAR 'DOD,

Broadly speaking, there were four great schools of Buddhist thought that came
out of India—the "land of the realized." Members of the Vatsiputriya section of
the "Detailist" school[154] assert that what we seek to see does not exist is any
self which is unchanging, and singular, and independent. Other members of the
Detailist school, as well as those of the "Scripturalist" school,[155] teach that what
we seek to deny is something that can stand on its own, something which exists
in a substantial way.

SEMS TZAM PAS GZUNG 'DZIN RDZAS GZHAN GYIS GRUB PA DE DGAG
BYAR 'DOD, RANG RGYUD PAS BLO GNOD MED LA SNANG BA'I DBANG
GIS BZHAG TZAM MA YIN PAR YUL RANG GI THUN MONG MA YIN PA'I
GDOD LUGS SU GRUB PA DE DGAG BYAR 'DOD,

The "Mind-Only" school[156] says that what we come to realize does not exist is any case where the subject that holds an object and the object which it holds are made from any different "substance." [157] What we call the "Independent," one part of the Middle Way school,[158] believes that what we come to refute is any object that exists in some unique way of its own, rather than being established as an existent thing simply by virtue of its having appeared to an unaffected awareness.[159]

THAL 'GYUR BAS NI, RTOG PAS PHAR BTAGS TZAM MIN PAR YUL KHO
RANG GI STENG NAS TSUR GRUB PA DE DGAG BYAR 'DOD PA YIN,

The "Implication" section of the Middle Way school,[160] finally, teaches that what we come to see has no existence is an object which exists from its own side, rather than simply existing through a concept supplied from our side.

LAM GTZO 'DIR 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN POS, DE PHYIR RTEN
'BREL RTOGS PA'I THABS LA 'BAD, , CES RTEN 'BREL RTOGS PA'I THABS
LA 'BAD GSUNGS PA LAS, STONG NYID RTOGS PA'I THABS LA 'BAD MA
GSUNGS PA 'DI DGOS PA SHIN TU CHE STE,

Here in the verses of the Three Principal Paths our gentle protector, the great Tsongkapa, has urged us to try to perceive interdependence; as the line goes, "Make efforts in ways then to perceive interdependence." This he does instead of telling us to "Make efforts in ways to perceive emptiness," and for an extremely important reason.

RTEN 'BREL 'JOG TSUL LA DNGOS SMRA BAS NI, RGYU RKYEN LA BR TEN
NAS 'BYUNG BA'I RGYU MTSAN GYIS RTEN 'BREL 'JOG PA LAS, RTAG PA
LA RTEN 'BREL MI 'JOG,

Different schools have different ways of explaining "interdependence." The "Functionalist" group[161] says that when something is "interdependent," it's because it has come about through various causes and conditions. This doesn't allow them to establish interdependence for those objects which are unchanging, and have no causes.

RANG RGYUD PAS DE LAS 'JOG TSUL CUNG DRAG PA RANG GI CHA
SHAS LA BR TEN NAS GRUB PA RTEN 'BREL GYI DON DU 'JOG PAS RTAG
MI RTAG GNYI GA'I STENG DU RTEN 'BREL 'JOG,

The "Independent" group has a way of describing interdependence that's a little bit better. They say that something is interdependent whenever it exists in dependence upon its parts. They then can establish interdependence with both changing and unchanging objects: for those with causes and without.

DBU MA THAL 'GYUR BAS NI, 'JOG BYED DE DAG LAS PHRA BA GDAGS
GZHI DANG 'DOGS BYED RTOG PA TSAD MA GNYIS LA BR TEN NAS
BTAGS CHOS DE 'BYUNG BA LA RTEN 'BREL GYI DON DU 'JOG PAS,

The way the last group, the one we call "Implication," decides that something is interdependent is subtler than all the rest. They say that something is interdependent when we have taken two things—a reasonable basis to be given a name and a reasonable idea to give it a name—and come out with an object we gave a name.

RTEN 'BREL PHRA MO NI STONG NYID RTOGS PA'I THABS MA YIN
KYANG , GRUB MTHA' THUN MONG DU KHAS LEN PA'I RGYU 'BRAS KYI
RTEN 'BREL 'DI THOG MAR BSTAN NA CHAD LTA LAS BSRUNG BA DANG
, STONG NYID RTOGS PA'I THABS SU 'GYUR BAS NA, STONG NYID RTOGS
PA'I THABS SU THOG MAR RTEN 'BREL NAS KHRID PA 'DI GNAD SHIN TU
CHE BA YIN GSUNGS,

This subtle form of interdependence is not itself the way to perceive emptiness, but there is a good reason why we present interdependence—in the cause-and-effect interpretation accepted by all the schools—here at the very outset. First of all it prevents students from swinging to the opposite extreme where they believe that, if all things are empty, they can have no existence at all. Secondly, a correct understanding of interdependence does lead one to the way of perceiving emptiness. And so, concluded our Lama, there is crucial significance to presenting the instructions on interdependence first as the first step on the way to perceiving emptiness.

XV. What is Correct View?

GNYIS PA LTA BA GTAN LA 'BEB TSUL NI,

The second of the five points in our discussion of the third principal path addresses the question: what is correct view? The answer appears in the next verse of the root text.

,GANG ZHIG 'KHOR 'DAS CHOS RNAMS THAMS CAD KYI,
,RGYU 'BRAS NAM YANG BSLU BA MED MTHONG ZHING ,
,DMIGS PA'I GTAD SO GANG YIN KUN ZHIG PA,
,DE NI SANGS RGYAS DGYES PA'I LAM LA ZHUGS,
,ZHES PAS BSTAN,

(10)

**A person's entered the path that pleases the Buddhas
When for all objects, in the cycle or beyond,
He sees that cause and effect can never fail,
And when for him they lose all solid appearance.**

DE YANG GANG ZHIG SOGS KYIS STONG GZHI CHOS CAN DANG , RGYU
'BRAS SOGS KYIS RTEN 'BREL GYI GTAN TSIGS DANG , DMIGS PA'I SOGS
KYIS BSGRUB BYA BSTAN,

The line here about "when for all objects" gives us the subject under consideration: what we will see is empty. The line with the words "cause and effect" is meant to give us the classic logical reason for proving things are empty: "because they are interdependent." The line with "they lose all solid appearance" presents us the premise that the reason is meant to prove.

CHOS THAMS CAD CES GZUGS NAS RNAM MKHYEN GYI BAR GYI CHOS
THAMS CAD RANG GI CHA SHAS LA BRTEN NAS GRUB PAS NA THA
SNYAD DU RGYU 'BRAS BSLU BA MED PA DANG , DGAG BYA RANG
BZHIN GYIS GRUB PA'I DMIGS GTAD ZHIG NAS BDEN PAR GRUB PA'AM,
RANG BZHIN GYIS GRUB PA'I DNGOS PO CUNG ZAD TZAM YANG MED
PAR RTOGS PA DE RGYAL BA DGYES PA'I LAM YIN,

The expression "all objects" refers to each and every object from basic physical matter on up to the omniscience of a Buddha. They all exist in dependence upon their parts, so in a manner of speaking their "cause and effect can never fail." The antithesis, which we seek to disprove, is that these objects could have the solid existence they appear to have: that they could exist naturally. "When they lose all solid appearance"—that is, when we perceive that there is not a single thing in the universe which has any true or natural existence—then we have found "the path that pleases the Buddhas."

RANG CAG 'KHOR BAR 'KHOR BYED KYI RTZA BA BDAG 'DZIN MA RIG

PA 'DI LA THUG, DE GCOD PA LA BDAG MED RTOGS PA'I SHES RAB
BSKYED DGOS, BDAG MED GTAN LA 'BEB LUGS RGYAS PAR NI LAM RIM
LAS GSUNGS PA LTAR GNAD BZHI'I DPYAD PA SOGS DANG SBYAR NA
LEGS KYANG , 'DIR RTEN 'BREL GYI GTAN TSIGS LA BR TEN NAS LTA BA'I
GNAD 'GAG MDOR BSDUS TZAM ZHUS NA,

If we look for the very root that keeps you and I going round in this circle of life, we come down to ignorance, to our grasping for a "self." To cut this root, we must develop wisdom which perceives that no such "self" exists. If we were to discuss what no-self is in any detailed way, it would be best to apply a number of sections from the works on the Steps to the path; one example would be the "fourfold analysis." [162] Here though we will give only a brief presentation of the most vital points concerning correct view, and we will use the classical reasoning based on interdependence.

DE YANG CHOS THAMS CAD DGAGS GZHI DANG 'DOGS BYED LA BR TEN
NAS BYUNG BA LAS, DE LA MA LTOS PAR RANG NGOS NAS GRUB PA
RDUL TZAM YANG MED PAS, NGA YANG LUS SEMS GNYIS TSOGS KYI
STENG DU PHAR BTAGS PA TZAM LA BR TEN NAS BYUNG BA LAS, LUS
SEMS GNYIS TSOGS PA'I STENG DU PHAR BTAGS PA LA MA LTOS PAR
NGA KHO RANG GI NGOS NAS TSUR GRUB PA MED, LUS SEMS GNYIS RE
RE NAS KYANG RANG RANG GI NGOS NAS TSUR GRUB PA MED,

Now every existent object is a product of something to be given a name and something else to give it a name. There is not a single atom of anything in the universe which does not rely on this process—there is nothing which exists from its own side. I too then am a product: someone has taken two things together, my body and my mind, and called it "me." I am nothing more than that. There is no "me" which exists from its own side; there is no "me" which does not rely on someone taking my body and mind together and granting it the name. Neither in fact do my body or my mind themselves exist from their own sides.

'DI LA RTAGS BKOD NA, 'KHOR 'DAS KYI CHOS RNAMS CHOS CAN, BDEN
'DZIN GYI DMIGS PA'I GTAD SO RANG GI NGO BOS GRUB PA CUNG ZAD
TZAM YANG MED DE, RTEN 'BREL YIN PA'I PHYIR,

We can express all this in the classical form of a logical statement:

Consider all objects, those of the cycle
and those beyond it.

They have none of the true and solid existence
that I hold them to have;
they cannot exist on their own,
Because they are interdependent.

DE YANG RTEN 'BREL ZHES GZHAN LA BRTEN NAS 'BREL BA'AM GZHAN
LA BRTEN NAS 'BYUNG NA RANG NGOS NAS GRUB THABS MED PA

What we mean here by "interdependence" is that all objects are interrelated with others on which they depend; that is, they occur through dependence on other objects. This is why there is absolutely no way they can exist on their own.

DPER NA, DGON PA'I DBU MDZAD DANG YUL GYI DPON PO SOGS
BSKO BA NA, DBU MDZAD DU 'OS PA'I DBU MDZAD KYI GDAGS GZHI
TSAD MA'I MI ZHIG LA, MKHAN PO LTA BUS 'DI DBU MDZAD YIN NO
ZHES MING BRDAS PHAR MA BTAGS BAR DU DBU MDZAD KYI GDAGS
GZHI TSOGS KYANG DBU MDZAD DU GRUB MI THUB,

We can take for example the way we appoint the chanting master of a monastery, or the governor of some district, or any similar figure. First there must be a reasonable basis to be called "chanting master": there must be a person who is worthy of being the chanting master. Then there must be someone like the abbot of the monastery who says, "He is now the chanting master." Until the abbot does so, until the abbot applies the name and the concept to this person, he cannot be the chanting master—even though he may have all the qualities you need to be named "chanting master."

MING BRDAS PHAR MA BTAGS PAR DANG PO NAS DBU MDZAD RANG
STENG NAS GRUB GRUB PA ZHIG YOD NA AA MA'I KHOG PA LA YOD
DUS NAS GANG ZAG DE DBU MDZAD YIN DGOS PA DANG , AA MA'I
MNGAL NAS SKYE DUS KYANG DBU MDZAD SKYES SONG ZER DGOS PA
LA,

If this were not the case, and if the person were somehow the chanting master from the beginning, all on his own without anyone putting the name or idea on him, then he would have to have been the chanting master all along—from the time he lay in his mother's womb. And when he was born, the moment he came out of her womb, people then should have said, "Here comes the chanting master!"

DE LTAR MI ZER BAR RKYEN GZHAN LA BR TEN NAS DBU MDZAD DU
GRUB DGOS TE, GDAGS GZHI DBU MDZAD 'OS PA'I GRVA PA ZHIG LA
'DOGS MKHAN TSAD MA ZHIG GIS 'DI DBU MDZAD YIN ZHES PHAR MA
BTAGS BAR DBU MDZAD MI ZER ZHING , KHO RANG GIS KYANG DBU
MDZAD YIN SNYAM PA MED KYANG , KHYOD DBU MDZAD YIN NO
ZHES RTOG PAS PHAR BTAGS TZAM NAS BZUNG DBU MDZAD DANG
DBU MDZAD ZER ZHING , KHO RANG GIS KYANG NGA DBU MDZAD YIN
SNYAM PA DE BYUNG BA RED,

But people didn't say it, because getting to be the chanting master depends on many other factors. We don't call someone "chanting master" until there is a basis to give the name—a monk who is fit to be chanting master, and until a person qualified to give him the name hangs it on him, and says "This is the chanting master." Neither until this time does the person himself think "I am the chanting master." But once the concept has been applied to him, "You are the chanting master," then people start to talk about him as "chanting master," and he too begins to think "I am the chanting master."

RTA LTA BU YANG RTA KHO RANG GI PHUNG PO DANG SHES PA GNYIS
'DZOMS TE RGYU RKYEN TSOGS PA'I STENG DU RTA ZHES PHAR BTAGS
PA TZAM YIN, KHANG PA YANG GDAGS GZHI TSOGS PA LA BR TEN NAS
BTAGS PA TZAM RED,

The case is the same with something like a horse. We take the body and the mind of the horse, and we put them together—we take all the proper causes and conditions together—and label them with the name "horse." A building is the same too: nothing but a name put on a certain collection of parts that act as the basis to receive the name.

DE BZHIN DU CHOS THAMS CAD RANG RANG GI GDAGS GZHI TSOGS PA
LA BR TEN NAS CHOS DE DANG DE ZHES PHAR MING BRDAS BZHAG PA
TZAM LAS, GDAGS GZHI LA MA BLTOS PAR YUL KHO RANG GI NGOS
NAS TSUR GRUB PA RDUL PHRAN TZAM YANG MED,

And the same goes for every existing entity: they are nothing but a name and a concept, "This we call this, and that we call that," applied to the collection of parts that acts as the basis of the particular entity's name. There does not exist the single tiniest bit of anything that is some kind of object on its own, divorced of the parts we give its name.

'O NA CHOS THAMS CAD PHAR BTAGS TZAM YIN NA GSER LA RAG
DANG , KA BA LA BUM PA LTA BU BTAGS NA DER GRUB CHOG GAM
SNYAM NA, DE MI CHOG STE PHAR BTAGS TZAM YIN KYANG DE BTAGS
PA LA GDAGS GZHI TSAD MA ZHIG DGOS,

"Well then," you might think to yourself, "if every object is nothing more than what we label it, then I can go out and call gold 'brass,' or call a pillar a 'pitcher,' and that's just what they will be." But it's not; we do say that things are just labeled what they are, but for the label to be applied, the basis that gets it must be a reasonable one for the particular label.

BTAGS PA DE'ANG KHYAD CHOS GSUM LDAN ZHIG DGOS, KHYAD
CHOS GSUM NI, THA SNYAD PA'I SHES PA LA GRAGS PA YIN PA DANG ,
DE LA THA SNYAD PA'I TSAD MA GZHAN GYIS MI GNOD PA, DON DAM
DPYOD BYED KYI RIGS PAS KYANG MI GNOD PA STE DE GSUM DANG
LDAN DGOS,

When we apply a label, three conditions must be present. The three are as follows: (1) the object must be known to a conventional perception; (2) no other conventional perception can contradict its existence; and (3) no ultimate analysis can contradict its existence either. All three must be there.

THA SNYAD PA'I TSAD MA GZHAN GYIS GNOD TSUL YANG RGYANG
RING PO'I THO YOR LTA BU LA GZHAN ZHIG GIS PHA GI MI ZHIG YIN
ZHES SMRAS PAS DE YID CHES KYANG , THO YOR DNGOS SU NGES PA'I
MI ZHIG GIS DE THO YOR YIN PAR SMRAS PA NA, SNGA MA'I THO YOR
MIR BZUNG BA DE GTAN YAL DU 'GRO BA NI GDAGS GZHI TSAD MA
MIN PA'I RTAGS RED,

Now here is what we mean when we say that one conventional perception has been contradicted by another. We can be standing looking at a scarecrow way off in the distance, and someone next to us says "That's a man over there," and we believe him. Then someone comes up who's seen for himself that the thing is a scarecrow and tells us "It's just a scarecrow." Our initial perception of the thing as a man then vanishes. This is an indication that the basis was not a reasonable one for the given name.

DER MA ZAD, RI BONG LA RVA YOD CES PHAR BTAGS KYANG GDAGS
GZHI TSAD MA MIN PAS DER GRUB TU MED, DE LTAR NA THA SNYAD
KYI BLO TSAD MAS GDAGS GZHI YANG DE DANG DE'I TSOGS PA TSAD

MA DNGOS SU YOD PA ZHIG LA BTAGS DGOS,

That's not all—we can go around giving out all sorts of names, we can say "Rabbits have horns," but that's not going to make the horns exist; there's no reasonable basis to get the label. Therefore we must have a reasonable, conventional state of mind that is applying a name to a reasonable collection of parts which acts as the basis we want to give the name—and which actually exists.

DES NA YUL GYI DPON PO YANG 'OS PA'I MI GDAGS GZHI TSAD MA ZHIG LA BTAGS PA LAS, MO RANG MA'I BU GLEN LKUGS LTA BU LA DPON DU MI BSKO BA YIN,

Thus too when we go to name somebody governor of a district we have to have a person who is suitable to be given the name—we must have a reasonable basis for our label. We don't take some deaf-mute bastard kid and appoint him governor.

DE THAMS CAD RANG NGOS NAS GRUB NA GDAGS GZHI'I TSOGS PA LA BLTOS MI DGOS PAR RANG RANG GI NGOS NAS TSUR GRUB PA ZHIG DGOS KYANG , DE LTAR MIN PAR GDAGS GZHI TSOGS PA LA BLTOS NAS GRUB DGOS PAS NA RANG NGOS NAS MA GRUB PA DANG , RANG BZHIN GYIS MA GRUB PA, BDEN PAR MA GRUB PA RED,

If any of these things existed from its own side, it wouldn't have to rely on the group of parts we give its name, and then each one would have to exist out there, on its own. But that's not the way it is: they can only exist in dependence on the group of parts we give their name. And this is why they do not exist from their own side, and they do not exist naturally, and they do not exist truly.

DPER NA YUL GYI RGAN PO YANG PHAR BTAGS NAS GRUB PA LAS, KHO RANG GI NGOS NAS TSUR GRUB PA MED KYANG , RANG TSOS RGAN PO KHO RANG GI NGOS NAS TSUR GRUB PA LTAR SNANG ZHING ZHEN PA LTAR GRUB PA DE DGAG BYA YIN,

We can take some local chieftain; he is chief only so far as we on our part call him "chief," and not out there from his own side. To us though the chief appears to exist out there on his own, and we take him to be this way. A chief that could exist as we take him to is just what we want to see does not exist.

DE BZHIN DU NGA DE YANG LUS SEMS GNYIS KYI NGOS NAS TSUR
GRUB PA MED PAR, GDAGS GZHI TSOGS PA LA SGRA RTOG GIS THA
SNYAD TZAM DU PHAR BTAGS TZAM GYIS SNANG RGYU YOD TZAM
ZHIG YOD,

This "me" is the same way too. It is not something that exists out there on top of my body and mind. Rather, it is only something that appears to me only because I have applied the name: I have taken the collection of parts and put upon them the label and concept of "me": the "me" is only in name.

BTAGS LUGS KYANG PHAR NGOS NAS GDAGS GZHI DE GRUB, TSUR
NGOS NAS 'DOGS BYED RTOG PA DANG SGRA GNYIS KYIS BTAGS TZAM
PA DE YIN,

The process of labeling occurs like this. The basis to be given the name exists out there. From our side come the concept that applies the name and the name itself. We come out then with something labeled—and it's nothing more than that.

KHANG PA LTA BUR MTSON NA, KHANG PA GSAR PA BZO DBYIBS BKOD
PA LEGS PA 'DRA 'DRA GSUM GSAR DU BZOS YOD NA DE GSUM SO SOR
MING MA BTAGS PA'I SNGA ROL TU DANG PO NAS GZIM CHUNG SOGS
SU MA GRUB KYANG , KHANG PA'I BDAG PO DES 'DI GZIM CHUNG YIN,
'DI RUNG KHANG YIN ZHES PA LTA BU MING GIS PHAR BTAGS PA NA
GZHI NAS 'DI GZIM CHUNG NGO , , 'DI RUNG KHANG NGO SNYAM PA
SOGS DE DANG DE SO SOR GRUB, GDAGS GZHI KHANG PA GSUM TSOGS
KYANG 'DOGS BYED KYIS PHAR MA BTAGS NA MI GRUB PAS KHANG PA
DE YANG MING DANG RTOG PAS BTAGS PA TZAM YIN, DES NA KHANG
PA TZAM MA YIN PAR CHOS GANG DANG GANG YANG GDAGS GZHI LA
MI BYED PAR BTAGS CHOS DE LA BYA DGOS,

We can illustrate this with a building. Say that someone has just put up three new buildings, each with the same attractive design. They cannot be the "sleeping quarters" or anything else from the very beginning, before they are given their separate names. But then the owner comes and puts a different name on each building: he says, "This one will serve as the sleeping quarters, and this one will be the kitchen facility," and so on. Only after this do we think to ourselves, "These are the sleeping quarters," or "This is the kitchen facility"—and only then do each of them exist as such. We can have a basis to get the name—the group of buildings—but until the one to give them the name actually does so, they're not the three. Thus a building too is nothing more than something labeled

with a name and a concept. And we are talking about more than just some building; the point is that any existent entity is just the same: we must take it to be a product of the labeling process, and not the basis which receives our label.

DE BZHIN DU THA SNYAD PA'I NGA DE RTOG PAS PHAR BTAGS TZAM
YIN KYANG , NGED TSO LA PHAR BTAGS TZAM MIN PAR NGA KHO
RANG GI NGOS NAS TSUR DGA' SDUG SOGS THAMS CAD SHUGS CAN
MYONG MKHAN GYI LING LING PO ZHIG SHAR, DE 'DZIN MKHAN GYI
BLO DE BDEN 'DZIN LHAN SKYES SAM, 'JIG LTA LHAN SKYES YIN, DE
LTAR 'DZIN PA'I NGA TSUGS THUB LING NGE BA DE DGAG BYA'I BDAG
YIN, 'DI LA DPAL LDAN ZLA BA GRAGS PAS KYANG ,

This applies equally to the conventional "me"—it only exists insofar as I label it with some concept. You and I tend to think of "me" as something more than just a creation of names; we have this vivid mental image of him out there on his own, the intimate experiencer of all that he feels, pleasure or pain or whatever. The state of mind that clutches to "me" this way is what we call "inborn grasping to a self," or the "inborn destructible view." [163] And the oh-so-vivid, self-standing "me" that this state of mind clings to is the self that we must come to see does not exist. As the glorious Chandrakirti has said as well,

DE LA BDAG CES BYA BA NI GANG ZHIG DNGOS PO RNAMS KYI GZHAN
LA RAG MA LAS PA'I NGO BO RANG BZHIN TE DE MED PA NI BDAG MED
PA'O, , ZHES GSUNGS,

Here what we call "self" refers to any nature or state objects could have in which they relied on nothing else. The non-existence of this is what we call "no-self." [164]

THA SNYAD PA'I NGA NI GDAGS GZHI DANG 'DOGS BYED LA BR TEN
NAS PHAR BTAGS PA TZAM YIN TE, 'JIGS BYED SKABS CHOS THAMS CAD
BR TEN NAS BTAGS PA YIN PA'I PHYIR, ZHES DANG , BDE MCHO G LAS
KUN RTOG GIS BTAGS PA TZAM GYI SGYU MA LTA BU'O, , ZHES GSUNGS
PA SOGS KYANG DON 'DI LA DGONGS PA RED,

Now the conventional "me"—the one that does exist—is only something we've created with a label, using some basis to take the label and some idea to give the label. This is what those lines in the ritual for the secret Frightener teaching are referring to as they start off, "Since every object is labeled, in dependence..." [165] The same sentiment is expressed, among other places, in the ritual for the secret

teaching of Highest Bliss: "Like an illusion, just labeled with a concept." [166]

ZHIB TU BYAS NA SNANG TSUL LA MA DPYAD PAR ZHEN TSUL LA
DPYAD DGOS PAS DGAG BYA YANG SNANG YUL MI BKAG PAR, ZHEN
YUL BKAG DGOS, 'DI DAG LA RTZA TSIG LTA BU,

If we really get into fine detail, we must analyze not the way that objects appear to us, but rather how we grasp them. Thus it is too with the object we want to see does not exist: it is not that we will deny what appears to us, but rather what we grasp. This then can be like our refrain:

RTOG PAS PHAR BTAGS YIN PA, GDAGS GZHI DANG 'DOGS BYED LA
BRTEN DGOS PA, RKYEN GZHAN LA BRTEN NAS BYUNG BA, RANG
NGOS NAS MA GRUB PA RNAMS NGES DGOS,

Let me realize that these things are labeled,
creations of concepts;
That they can exist only in dependence on a basis
to receive a name and someone to give the
name;
That they occur in dependence on many
other factors;
That they don't exist out there, on their own.

DGAG BYA'I ZHEN YUL YANG ZHEN YUL DE YOD MED BRTAG PA'I
SKABS SU PHAR BTAGS PA'I NGA DE MIN PA'I NGA KHO RANG GI NGOS
NAS TSUR GRUB PA LTA BU ZHIG 'CHAR BAS, NGA DE LUS SEMS LA
BRTEN NAS BTAGS PA TZAM MA YIN PAR, LUS SEMS GNYIS KYI STENG
NAS TSUR GRUB PA DE ZHEN YUL YIN,

Let's talk then about the thing we will see does not exist, in terms of the object we grasp. When we start to examine whether it exists or not, the image that comes to our mind is not the "me" that we have created with our labels, but rather some "me" that looks like it exists out there, on his own. The object we grasp therefore consists not of the "me" which is nothing but a label applied to our body and mind, but rather of the "me" which seems to exist out there on its own, on top of the body and the mind together.

DPER NA THAG KHRA LA MUN PA BABS PA MTHONG BA NA DANG POR
THAG KHRA LA SBRUL LO SNYAM DU PHAR BTAGS, DE RJES PHAR

BTAGS PA DE BRJED NAS THAG KHRA'I NGOS NAS SBRUL TSUR GRUB
PAR SNANG BAS DE LTAR SNANG BA DE DGAG BYA MA YIN, DE LTAR
SNANG BA LTAR DU GRUB PAR 'DZIN PA'I ZHEN YUL DE DGAG BYA YIN
PA BZHIN DU,

Let's say for example that dusk has fallen and you see some piece of rope with a checkered pattern. At first you put a name onto it and think to yourself, "Oh my! A snake!" After that you forget it was you who put the name on it and it starts to look like a snake out there on its own. The way that it looks just then is not what we want to see doesn't exist. Rather what we want to deny is what we grasp: that the thing we hold could really exist the way it looks to us to exist.

NGA LA DPYAD PA BYED PA'I TSE YANG RANG GI MING NAS 'BOD
MKHAN LTA BU BYUNG BA NA NGA LA BOS SNYAM DU DANG POR THA
SNYAD PA'I NGA DE SHAR, DE RJES KHYOD RKUN MA YIN LTA BU ZER
NA, NGA DE SHUGS CHE RU SONG STE NGAS RKUN MA MA BYAS PAR
NGA LA BSNYON 'DZUGS, NGAS NAD MI THEG SNYAM DU NGA DANG
NGA ZHES TSUGS THUB LING NGE BA'I NGA DE SHAR BAS,

It's just the same when we investigate this idea of "me." Suppose someone comes up and calls you out by name. At first the "me" that appears to you is simply the conventional one: you think to yourself, "He's calling me." But then he says to you, "So you're the thief!" or something like that. Then your "me" starts getting stronger and stronger; you start thinking to yourself "Why is he pointing the finger at me? It wasn't me who stole it. They can't blame ME!" You start saying "me" "me" and the "me" starts looking like a "me" that can stand on its own, a very vivid "me."

DE LTAR NGA THA SNYAD DU SNANG TZAM DE YANG MI BKAG, NGA
TSUGS THUB BDEN GRUB TU SNANG BA DE YANG MI BKAG, TSUGS
THUB BDEN GRUB TU SNANG BA'I NGA DE YANG MI DGAG PAR, NGA
TSUGS THUB TU GRUB PA'AM, NGA RANG BZHIN GYIS GRUB PA'AM,
RANG BZHIN GYIS GRUB PA'I NGA DE BKAG NAS,

Now we are not denying the existence of the ordinary, conventional "me" that first appeared to you. Nor are we denying that "me" appeared to stand on its own, that it appeared to truly exist. We are not even denying the "me" that appears to stand on its own, the "me" that appears to truly exist. Rather we are denying that "me" could actually stand on its own, that "me" could actually exist naturally: we are denying any "me" that could actually naturally exist.

LUS SEMS GNYIS LA MA BR TEN PAR NGA KHO RANG GI NGOS NAS
GRUB PA LING LING PO DE MED PAR STONG CHAM GYIS SONG BA NA
DBU MA'I LTA BA DANG POR RNYED PAR GSUNGS PAS, DES RGYAL BA
DGYES PA'I LAM RNYED PA YIN,

And when you deny this "me," when you see that this "me" does not exist—when
for your this so-vivid "me" that stands out there on his own without relying on
the two of mind and body ceases to be, and all that's left is simple emptiness of
him, then as the sages say you have first found the "view of the middle way."
And then you have found the "path that pleases the Victors."

DE LTAR BSKYANGS TE BRTAGS DON BTZAL NA CHOS THAMS CAD NGO
BOS GRUB PA RDUL TZAM YANG MI RNYED KYANG , THA SNYAD DU
SNANG RGYU YOD TZAM GYI RGYU 'BRAS BYA BYED TSANG MA
BSNYON MED DU 'THAD DE,

When you do this sort of analysis, and you seek the thing with the name, you
will never be able to find a single atom of anything in the universe that exists in
itself. All the normal workings of the world though are quite logical and proper;
things make other things happen, things do what they do, though all in only an
apparent way, in a conventionally agreed-upon way.

DPER NA, KHANG PA BDEN PAR GRUB PA RDUL TZAM MED KYANG
KHANG PA'I RGYU RKYEN TSOGS TE MING DANG RTOG PAS BTAGS
TZAM DU GRUB PA NA KHANG PA'I BYA BYED THAMS CAD BSLU MED
DU NUS PA DANG , ME LONG NANG GI BYAD BZHIN GYI GZUGS
BRNYAN BLO LA SNANG BA TZAM DANG SGRAS BRJOD PA TZAM LAS
'DI YIN ZHES NGOS BZUNG BRAL YANG GZUGS BRNYAN SNANG BA
TZAM DE'I STENG DU NAG NOG YOD MED SOGS RGYU 'BRAS KYI BYA
BZHAG THAMS CAD 'THAD PA BZHIN NO, , DE'I PHYIR THA SNYAD DU
YOD PAS YOD GO CHOD CING , DON DAM DU MED PAS MED GO MI
CHOD PA YIN,

A building for example can be without a single atom of "true" existence, and yet
so long as the causes and conditions for the building have come together—so
long as it exists solely by virtue of a name and our concept of it—then it can do
everything a building is supposed to do, and perfectly so. The reflection of some
object in a mirror too may never be more than just something that appears to the
mind and gets itself a name, it may never win any endorsement as being the

object itself, but it can still exhibit all the normal workings of causation; the reflection may be nothing more than an apparition, but it can still show you whether you have a spot on your face, or whatever. This then is why we say that "to exist, it's enough to exist conventionally; but not existing ultimately, is not enough to not exist."

RTEN 'BYUNG GI DON 'DI LEGS PAR SHES NA LAS 'BRAS LA NGES PA
SHUGS DRAG PO RNYED DE LAS 'BRAS LA RTZIS CHE RU 'GRO ,

Any person who really understands interdependence in the sense that we've just described it begins to develop a strong recognition of the laws of actions and their consequences—they become more and more important for him.

DE YIN TE, RGYU DGE SDIG LAS 'BRAS BU BDE SDUG SO SOR MA 'CHOL
BAR 'BYUNG BA RTEN 'BREL LAS BYUNG ZHING ,

And this is why. First of all, good deeds lead to pleasure and bad deeds lead to pain; each cause is connected to its own result—it can never go wrong somehow and produce the other result. This invariable relationship comes from interdependence.

RTEN 'BREL GYI DON RANG BZHIN MED PAR SHES PA NA THA SNYAD
TZAM DU RTEN 'BYUNG RGYU 'BRAS BSLU MED DU 'THAD PAR SHUGS
KYIS GO STE 'KHOR 'DAS KYI LAS 'BRAS LA NGES PA GTING NAS RNYED
PA ZHIG 'ONG ,

Once you understand the sense in which "interdependence" refers to lack of any natural existence, then you understand by implication that interdependence in the form of cause and effect is, in a merely conventional way, entirely proper or infallible. This then allows you to gain a total conviction towards the laws that govern all actions and consequences—whether they be those within the circle of life or those that are beyond it.

DE YANG TSOGS PA GZHAN LA BR TEN PAS NA RANG BZHIN GYIS MA
GRUB PA DANG , RANG BZHIN GYIS MA GRUB PAS NA RGYU 'BRAS
'THAD PA 'DI BYUNG BA YIN, RGYU 'BRAS KYI BYA BYED THAMS CAD
'THAD PA LA BR TEN NAS SA BON MYU GU DANG , MYU GU 'BRAS BUR
'GYUR BA SOGS BYUNG BA RED,

We can say then that, because it depends on some other group of things, no

object can exist naturally. And the fact that nothing exists naturally is what makes cause and effect perfectly plausible. And the fact that all the workings of cause and effect are perfectly plausible is what allows seeds to turn to sprouts, and sprouts to grains, and all the rest.

GZHAN DU NA NAS RANG BZHIN GYIS GRUB NA NAS MYU GU 'GYUR BA
SOGS DANG , GZHON NU RANG BZHIN GYIS GRUB NA GZHON NU
RGAN POR 'GYUR BA SOGS MI 'BYUNG LA, BDE 'GRO RANG BZHIN GYIS
GRUB NA BDE 'GRO BA DMYAL BAR 'GRO BA MI SRID CING , SEMS CAN
RANG BZHIN GYIS GRUB NA SEMS CAN SANGS RGYAS PAR MI SRID PA
SOGS KYI SKYON MANG ,

Suppose this were not the case, and seeds of barley or whatever existed naturally—then they could never turn into sprouts. Neither could children ever turn into adults, or anything of the like ever occur, if they all existed naturally. If the higher births existed naturally, then it would be impossible for a person in a higher birth to fall into the hells. If ordinary living beings existed naturally, then it would be impossible for such a being to become a Buddha, and so forth—the logical problems of being something "naturally" are many.

DES NA RGYU 'BRAS RTEN 'BYUNG DANG , RANG BZHIN GYIS MED PA
GNYIS GCIG GROGS SU GCIG 'GRO BA 'DI DBU MA THAL 'GYUR BA'I
KHYAD CHOS THUN MONG MA YIN PA YIN GSUNGS,

What we've said above, concluded our Lama, conveys a teaching which is therefore unique to the "Implication" section of the Middle Way school: that these two principles cause and effect, or interdependence, and the fact that nothing exists naturally—go hand in hand, each supporting the other.

Notes to Reading Nine

[143.] *path of preparation*: Another set of five paths, or levels of realization, is described in Buddhism. Included are the paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing, habituation, and "no more learning." The five for the "greater" way differ from those of the "lesser" way (see note 56).

[144.] *all eight levels*: Refers to intensely deep forms of meditation that lead to later births in the eight sections of the form and formless realms, which are still counted as suffering (see note 14).

[145.] *The worldly meditate on concentration...* The verse is found on ff. 44a-44b of this famous teaching of the Buddha (see entry 23). The following citation is the next verse in the sutra, from f. 44b. The wording of the edition available to us is slightly different, but the intent equal. Udraka was a non-Buddhist sage who woke from an extended period of meditation and went into a rage because mice had in the meantime chewed away at his impressive yogi's locks of hair; because of his anger, he was then born in the hells.

[146.] *There is no second door...* Quotation from f. 13b of Master Aryadeva's work (see entry 40 and note 79).

[147.] *Wisdom not steeped in method...* The lines appear on f. 313a of this well-known sutra, and are clarified by it immediately afterward (see entry 35).

[148.] *By this virtue may all beings...* Final lines of the Master's *Sixty Verses of Reasoning*, and often used nowadays as a prayer of dedication after the good deed of listening to a teaching. Original from f. 22b, entry 5.

[149.] *On vast wide-spreading wings...* Quotation on f. 212a of *Entering the Middle Way* (see entry 74 and note 129).

[150.] *Understanding that Has No End*: A famed teaching of the Buddha requested by a disciple of this name (entry 49). The *Root Wisdom* of Master Nagarjuna (c. 200 A.D.) is listed at entry 4; for other works of his famed "Collection," see the biography in the English translation of his *Letter to a Friend* (p. 10, entry 95).

[151.] *the masters Buddhapalita, etc.*: For the commentary of Master Buddhapalita (c. 500 A.D.), see entry 85. Master Aryadeva's work has already been listed (see note 79), as has Master Chandrakirti's *Entering the Middle Way* (note 129). For A

Clarification of the Words, see entry 73.

[152.] *There's no way to peace...* From the sixth chapter of Master Chandrakirti's work (f. 205a, entry 74). Briefly, the "two truths" mentioned are what are usually called "deceptive truth" and "ultimate truth." Both are valid, and all objects have both. The dependence of objects (especially in the sense described below, upon concepts and names) is their conventional or deceptive truth. Their appearance is "deceptive" because to the minds of normal people they appear to be something other than what they actually are. The "ultimate" (here called "real") truth of objects is their lack of non-dependence, and is first seen directly in the all-important meditative state known as the "path of seeing." Seeing this truth directly acts immediately to stop the process through which we suffer.

[153.] *Nagarjuna's student was Chandrakirti...* The lines are from his work on the two truths; see f. 72a, entry 56.

[154.] *"Detailist" school*: So called because "they devote their study exclusively to the classical commentary known as *Detailed Exposition*, or else because they understand the *Exposition's* meaning" (the First Dalai Lama, entry 14, p. 14).

[155.] *"Scripturalist" school*: The name is said to come from the fact that "this school of philosophers holds that scripture [e.g. sutra] is valid, but denies the validity of classical commentaries such as the Seven Works on Knowledge" (ibid).

[156.] *"Mind-Only" school*: The name comes from the school's assertion that "every existing object is nothing but part of the mind," although this general description is further refined by the school.

[157.] *made from any different "substance"*: That is, come from any different principal cause or latency.

[158.] *"Independent" part of the Middle Way school*: The school is so named because its followers advocate a middle way which avoids the extreme of thinking things exist (naturally) and the extreme of thinking things can't exist (if they don't exist naturally). The "Independents" are one of the two parts of the school; they believe one must lead a person to the correct view that things are empty of natural existence by means of taking an independent object and discussing it in common terms—rather than starting from the person's own incorrect view and demonstrating the absurdity that it necessarily implies. These points are

illuminated by the great Changkya Rolpay Dorje, said to be a former life of Pabongka Rinpoche himself, in his *Comparative Systems* (pp. 289, 305, 325; entry 80).

[159.] *unaffected awareness*: Any normal, "reasonable" perception—the vast majority of our everyday perceptions; the opposite would be those infrequent cases where we take something wrong, such as mistaking a moving leaf for a small animal as we drive a car, or believing in something unreal that we think we see under the influence of alcohol or a drug.

[160.] *"Implication" section of the Middle Way school*: So named because of their belief that a line of reasoning which implies a necessary absurdity in an opponent's incorrect view on the subject is sufficient to inspire in his mind the correct view of the nature of existence (again see Changkya Rolpay Dorje, p. 407, entry 80).

[161.] *"Functionalist" group*: Refers collectively to the Detailist, Scripturalist, and Mind-Only schools, since all assert that functional things exist truly.

[162.] *the fourfold analysis*: Briefly, Pabongka Rinpoche lists the four as follows in his treatise on the Steps (entry 47, ff. 362-377):

- 1) *Identify what you deny*: any object that could exist truly. You cannot catch a thief if you don't know what he looks like.
- 2) *Recognize the necessity*: that if an object exists truly, it must be truly one or truly many.
- 3) *Perceive that it is not truly one*: if you were truly your parts, you couldn't say "parts," since you are only one.
- 4) *Perceive that it is not truly many*: if your parts were truly you, then when you took any one part it would be you—the same way you get a cow when you have a goat and a sheep and a cow and take out the goat and the sheep.

The conclusion is that since you are neither truly one nor truly many, you do not truly exist. Lord Tsongkapa discusses these points on ff. 374-475 of his greater Steps (entry 61).

[163.] *destructible view*: This way of looking at things is called "destructible" both because it focuses on me, and I will one day perish, and because the wrong view itself will one day be corrected and disappear.

[164.] *Here what we call a self...* Quotation from his commentary on the *400 Verses* of Master Aryadeva (note 79). See f. 187b, entry 72.

[165.] *Since every object is labeled...* Found on p. 396 of entry 45.

[166.] *Like an illusion...* The full line is found of f. 16a of the work, entry 70.

The Key that Unlocks the Door to the Noble Path (Lam bzang sgo 'byed) written by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-91), a commentary upon the *Three Principal Paths (Lam-gtzo rnam-gsum)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), folios 35a-41a.

XVI. How to Know When Your Analysis is Still Incomplete

GSUM PA LTA BA'I DPYAD PA MA RDZOGS PA'I TSAD NI,

The third of the five sections in our treatment of correct view explains how to know when the analysis you are conducting with the view you have is still incomplete. This point is brought out in the next verse of the root text:

,SNANG BA RTEN 'BREL BSLU BA MED PA DANG ,
,STONG PA KHAS LEN BRAL BA'I GO BA GNYIS,
,JI SRID SO SOR SNANG BA DE SRID DU,
,DA DUNG THUB PA'I DGONGS PA RTOGS PA MED,
,CES PAS BSTAN,

(11)

**You've yet to realize the thought of the Able
As long as two ideas seem to you disparate:
The appearance of things—infallible interdependence;
And emptiness—beyond taking any position.**

DE LTAR BSGOMS PAS LTA BA'I DPYAD PA RDZOGS NA RTEN 'BREL
DANG STONG PA GNYIS GCIG GROGS GCIG TU 'CHAR BA ZHIG DGOS
KYANG ,

Let's say you've meditated on the instructions we've given above. You are directing your view to analyze all phenomena. If your analysis is really complete, then interdependence and emptiness must appear to you to go hand in hand, supporting each other.

DE NI RGYA GAR BA KHA CIG DANG BOD SNGA MA TSO LTAR RANG
BZHIN MED PA GO MDOG MDOG BYAS KYANG RTEN 'BREL 'JOG LUGS
MA SHES PA LTA BU,

Despite this fact, it appears that people like some of the ancient Indian sages, and the earlier Tibetan Buddhists as well, who made it seem like they had grasped

the concept of no self-nature nonetheless did not understand how to explain interdependence.

SNANG BA RTEN CING 'BREL 'BYUNG DANG , STONG PA RANG BZHIN
GYIS MED PA GNYIS PHYOGS RE TZAM DU SHES KYANG DE GNYIS GZHI
GCIG GI STENG DU 'GAL 'DUR SONG STE,

What the verse is saying then, concluded our Lama, is this: "Suppose you do have some understanding of the two concepts individually: of (1) the '*appearance of things*,' or interdependence, and (2) *emptiness*--the fact that nothing exists naturally. But suppose to you they seem like contradictory characteristics—you think that no object could possess one, and still possess the other.

RGYU LAS 'BRAS BU MI 'CHOL BAR 'BYUNG BA'I RTEN 'BREL BSLU BA
MED PA DANG , CHOS THAMS CAD RANG GI NGO BOS GRUB PA RDUL
TZAM YANG MED PA'I STONG PA KHAS LEN DANG BRAL BA'I GO BA
GNYIS PO

"Consider these *two ideas*: (1) *infallible interdependence*, where causes (that is, actions) of a certain kind must always lead to results (consequences) of the same kind; and (2) emptiness, the idea *beyond taking any position*—the fact that no existent object in the universe contains a single atom of something that can exist on its own.

DE DUS NAM ZHIG BAR PHAN TSUN TSA GRANG LTAR SO SOR 'GAL
BAR SNANG BA DE SRID DU DA DUNG THUB PA'I DGONGS PA'I DON
MTHAR THUG PA DE PHYIN CI MA LOG PAR MA RTOGS ZHES PA YIN
GSUNGS,

"For such time as they appear this way to you—so long as the two ideas *seem to you* mutually exclusive, like hot and cold—then *you've yet to realize* perfectly the ultimate point of *the thought of the Able Ones*, the Buddhas."

XVII. How to Know When Your Analysis is Complete

BZHI PA LTA BA'I DPYAD PA RDZOGS PA'I TSAD NI,

This brings us to the fourth section: how to know when the analysis you are performing with the view you've developed is complete. This is explained in the next verse of the root text:

,NAM ZHIG RES 'JOG MED PAR CIG CAR DU,
,RTEN 'BREL MI BSLUR MTHONG BA TZAM NYID NAS,
,NGES SHES YUL GYI 'DZIN STANGS KUN 'JIG NA,
,DE TSE LTA BA'I DPYAD PA RDZOGS PA LAGS,
,ZHES PAS BSTAN,

(12)

**At some point they no longer alternate,
come together;
Just seeing that interdependence never fails
Brings realization that destroys how you
hold to objects,
And then your analysis with view is complete.**

DE YANG NAM ZHIG RES 'JOG MED PA ZHES CHOS THAMS CAD LA
MING RKYANG BTAGS YOD TZAM GYI DGE SDIG BYA BYED THAMS CAD
'THAD PA DANG , BTAGS DON BTZAL BA'I TSE NA CHOS DE DANG DE
RANG BZHIN GYIS GRUB PA RDUL TZAM YANG MED PA'I STONG PA
GNYIS

Now here's what we mean when we say that "at some point they no longer alternate." We take two things: first, the fact that everything about the way things work, and about good deeds and bad deeds, is perfectly proper, despite the fact that no single object is anything more than labels, just names. Secondly there is the fact that, when we try to seek out the thing that got the name, we find only emptiness: that there is not a single atom of natural existence in whatever object we have chosen.

RES 'JOG MIN PAR CIG CAR DU 'JOG THUB PA BYUNG NA STONG PA
DANG RTEN 'BYUNG GNYIS GZHI GCIG LA 'GAL MED DU 'JOG SHES
SHING ,

At some point you gain an ability to explain these two facts so that *they come together*, and *no longer alternate*. That is, you come to realize how both emptiness and interdependence can apply to one and the same object, with no contradiction at all.

GDAGS GZHI'I TSOGS PA LA BRTEN NAS RTOG PAS PHAR BTAGS TZAM

GYI RTEN 'BYUNG BSLU BA MED PAR MTHONG BA TZAM NYID NAS
BDEN 'DZIN GYI 'DZIN STANGS GTAN MED DU RTOGS TE STONG PA
RTEN 'BYUNG DANG , RTEN 'BYUNG STONG PAR SHAR BA ZHIG YOD,
DAM PA 'GA'I ZHAL NAS, RTEN 'BREL GYI GNAD SHES NA STONG NYID
KYI DON LHANG LA 'BUD GSUNGS PA YANG 'DI LA DGONGS PA RED,

You see then that interdependence is infallible, that it is nothing but using a concept to label the collection of parts that serve as the basis to take our label. *Just seeing this fact, that interdependence never fails, brings you a realization that completely obviates the way that your tendency to grasp to true existence holds its objects.* And then when you think of emptiness, you see interdependence; when you think of interdependence, you see emptiness. This is by the way what certain holy sages have meant when they said, "Once you grasp the secret of interdependence, the meaning of emptiness comes in a flash." [167]

DE LTAR BYUNG NA RTEN 'BREL GYI DON BDEN PAR MED PAR RTOGS
LA, BDEN PAR MED PA'I DON DES RTEN 'BREL BSLU BA MED PA LA NGES
PA SHUGS DRAG 'DREN THUB PAS DE NI DBU MA THAL 'GYUR BA'I LTA
BA'I DPYAD PA RDZOGS PA YIN ZHING , KLU SGRUB KYI DGONGS PA
THUN MONG MA YIN PA'ANG 'DI YIN GSUNGS,

Once all this happens to you, you come to realize that the point of interdependence is that nothing exists truly. And this point itself, that nothing exists truly, has the power then of bringing out in your mind a strong and certain realization that interdependence never fails. *And then you know that the analysis you are performing, now using the pure view of the "Implication" section of the Middle Way school, is finally complete.* We can also say, concluded our Lama, that you have then found the unique thought of Nagarjuna himself.

XVIII. A Unique Teaching of the "Implication" School

,GZHAN YANG SNANG BAS YOD MTHA' SEL BA DANG ,
,STONG PAS MED MTHA' SEL ZHING STONG PA NYID,
,RGYU DANG 'BRAS BUR 'CHAR BA'I TSUL SHES NA,
,MTHAR 'DZIN LTA BAS 'PHROG PAR MI 'GYUR RO,
,ZHES PAS BSTAN TE,

The fifth and final section in our explanation of correct view concerns a unique teaching followed by the "Implication" group of the Middle Way school. This instruction is contained in the following verse of the root text.

(13)

**In addition, the appearance prevents the
existence extreme;**

**Emptiness that of non-existence, and if
You see how emptiness shows in cause
and effect**

You'll never be stolen off by extreme views.

THAL 'GYUR BA MIN PA TSOS SNANG BAS MED MTHA' DANG , STONG
PAS YOD MTHA' SEL BAR BZHED KYANG ,

Now all the schools except for the members of the "Implication" group hold that an understanding of the appearance of things prevents you from falling into what we call the "extreme of thinking things do not exist," while an understanding of emptiness prevents you from falling into what is known as the "extreme of thinking things do exist."

THAL 'GYUR BA'I LUGS LA CHOS GANG DANG GANG YIN KYANG
SNANG BA TZAM LAS BDEN PAR MA GRUB PAS DON DAM DU YOD PA'I
YOD MTHA' DANG , SNANG BA TZAM DE RANG GI NGOS NAS MA GRUB
PA LA BR TEN NAS STONG PAS THA SNYAD DU MED PA'I MED MTHA' SEL
BA YIN,

The position of the Implication group though is that no particular object you can choose has any true existence, aside from merely appearing this way; and understanding this prevents you from going to the extreme of thinking things exist—that is, exist in an ultimate way. And because this mere appearance itself cannot exist on its own, an understanding of emptiness prevents your falling into the extreme of thinking things do not exist—that is, do not exist in a conventional way.

RTEN 'BREL YIN PHYIN CHAD RANG BZHIN GYIS MA GRUB PA'AM RANG
TSUGS MA THUB PA LAS GZHAN DU 'GRO SA MED DE, GDAGS GZHI'I
TSOGS PA LA BR TEN NAS 'BYUNG DGOS PA'I PHYIR, DPER NA, MI R GAN
'KHOG GIS RANG KHER LANGS MA THUB PAR GZHAN LA BR TEN NAS
LDANG DGOS PA NI RANG GIS TSUGS MA THUB PA YIN PA LTAR RKYEN
GZHAN ZHIG LA BR TEN DGOS TSAD RANG BZHIN GYIS TSUGS MA THUB
PA YIN,

Once something is interdependent there is no possibility for it to be anything else but something which does not exist naturally—something which cannot stand on its own. This is because it must then occur in dependence on the collection of parts which serve as the basis that receives our label. Look at the example of some feeble old man, unable to rise from his chair by himself, who must seek some other support to get up—he cannot stand on his own. Here it's a similar case: no object can stand on its own, no object can exist just naturally, so long as it must depend on any other factor.

SPYIR BDAG MED PA'I DON GTAN LA 'BEB PA'I RIGS PA MANG DU YOD
KYANG , RIGS PA'I RGYAL PO LTA BU NI RTEN 'BREL GYI RIGS PA 'DI YIN,

Generally speaking, there are a great number of logical proofs that can be used when you want to establish the meaning of no self-nature. There is one though which is like the king of them all, and this is it: the "proof through interdependence." Let's say we put forth this argument to someone, and we say:

DE YANG , MYU GU CHOS CAN, BDEN PAR MA GRUB STE, RTEN 'BREL
YIN PA'I PHYIR, CES RTAGS BKOD NA,

Consider a sprout.
It cannot exist truly,
For it is interdependent.

'DI LA PHYI ROL PAS NI CHOS THAMS CAD SPYI GTZO BO'I RNAM 'GYUR
DU 'DOD DE RTAGS MA GRUB KYI LAN BYED,

Members of certain non-Buddhist schools will answer "I disagree with your reason," which is to say, "Sprouts are not interdependent." This they must say because they believe that every object in the universe is a manifestation of some primeval One.

BOD SNGA RABS PA PHAL CHE BAS GTAN MED DU 'DOD PAS CHAD
MTHAR LHUNG , SEMS TZAM PA MAN GYI RANG SDE DNGOS SMRA
THAMS CAD KYIS RANG BZHIN GYIS MA GRUB NA RTEN 'BREL 'JOG MA
SHES PAS RTAG MTHAR LHUNG , RANG RGYUD PAS RTEN 'BYUNG KHAS
LEN KYANG RTEN 'BREL YIN NA RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS MA GRUB
PA'I KHYAB PA MI BZHED PAS DE YANG RTAG MTHAR SONG ,

The majority of the earlier Tibetan Buddhists fell into the extreme that we call "thinking things have stopped," for they would say that if something did not exist truly it could not exist at all. The schools from the Mind-Only on down, the group of schools known collectively as the "Functionalists," all fall into the extreme of "thinking things are permanent," for they cannot explain interdependence if they accept that nothing exists naturally. Members of the "Independent" group within the Middle Way school accept the idea of interdependence, but do not agree that if something is interdependent it cannot "exist by definition." This too is tantamount to the extreme of thinking things are permanent.

MKHAS PA DBU MA PAS NI RANG BZHIN GYIS MED KYANG GTAN NAS
MED PA MA YIN PA DANG , THA SNYAD TZAM DU YOD KYANG RANG
BZHIN GYIS YOD PA MA YIN PA'I DBYE BA BZHIR PHYE, DNGOS SMRA
BA SOGS KYI 'KHRUL GZHI YOD MED BZHI PO 'DI MA PHYED PA'I SKYON
YIN,

The real sages of the Middle Way school make a fourfold distinction: they say that nothing exists naturally, but not that nothing exists at all; everything exists merely by convention, but everything exists without existing naturally. The point of error for the Functionalists and those other schools is their failure to distinguish between these four: two kinds of "nothing exists" and two kinds of "everything exists."

THAL 'GYUR BA'I LUGS LA BDEN PAR MED DE, RTEN 'BREL YIN PA'I
PHYIR, ZHES PA 'DIS RTAG CHAD KYI MTHA' GNYIS KA SEL ZHING , DE
YANG DANG POS RTAG MTHA' DANG , GNYIS PAS CHAD MTHA' SEL BA
YIN,

According to the Implication system, both extremes—thinking things are permanent and thinking things have stopped—can be prevented with a single logical statement: "It cannot exist truly, because it is interdependent." The first part of the statement keeps us from the extreme of thinking things are permanent; the second, from the extreme of thinking things have stopped.

CO NE BLA MA RIN PO CHES 'DI GNYIS RE RES KYANG RTAG CHAD KYI
MTHA' GNYIS KA SEL BAR GSUNGS KYIN YOD, DE SEL LUGS KYANG
BDEN PAR MED DE ZHES PA'I TSIG ZIN GYIS RTAG MTHA' DANG , BDEN
PAR MED PA'I SHUGS LA SPYIR MED PA MA YIN PAR BSTAN PAS CHAD
MTHA' SEL, RTEN 'BREL YIN PA'I PHYIR ZHES PA'ANG 'DIS MTSON NUS

PAR GSUNGS,

My own precious teacher, Choney Lama,[168] was always saying that both parts of the statement *each* prevent *both* of the extremes—permanence and stopping. He would explain this as follows: the literal sense of the statement's first part, "It cannot exist truly," serves to prevent the extreme of thinking things are permanent. The implication of saying that something cannot exist "truly" though is to say that, more generally, it is not non-existent; this then disallows the extreme of thinking that things have stopped. And this description, he would say, was enough for us to figure out for ourselves the process for the second part of the statement: "...because it is interdependent."

DES NA DPAL LDAN ZLA BAS KYANG ,
 ,DE PHYIR RTEN 'BYUNG RIGS PA 'DI YIS NI,
 ,LTA NGAN DRA BA MTHA' DAG GCOD PAR BYED,
 ,CES GSUNGS PA RED,

With this understanding we can see why the glorious Chandrakirti stated:

Therefore this proof employing interdependence
 Cuts the net of every mistaken view.[169]

DE LTAR CHOS THAMS CAD BDEN PAR MED PA DANG RTEN 'BREL YIN
 PA'I RTAGS KYIS MTHA' GNYIS KA SEL BAS NA, RTZA SHE LAS,

So we've shown that no object in the universe exists truly; we've given "because it's interdependent" as our reason for saying so; and we've demonstrated that these two facts can prevent one from falling into either extreme. This too is why we see statements like the following, from *Root Wisdom*:

,GANG LA STONG PA NYID RUNG BA,
 ,DE LA THAMS CAD RUNG BAR 'GYUR,
 ,CES DANG ,

Everything is right for any thing
 For which the state of emptiness is right.[170]

MDO LAS KYANG ,
 ,GZUGS STONG PA'O,
 ,STONG PA NYID GZUGS SO,

,ZHES SOGS GSUNGS,

Or the well-known sutra lines:

Form is emptiness,
Emptiness form.[171]

'DI YANG RTEN 'BYUNG STONG PA DANG , STONG PA RTEN 'BYUNG GI
DON DU GSUNGS PA YIN, DE BZHIN DU NGA STONG PA'O, , STONG PA
NYID NGA'O, , ZHES SBYAR NA GO BAD BDE BAR

These last lines by the way are stated to show that interdependence is itself empty, and emptiness itself interdependent. It helps your understanding of this point if you take the same pattern and read it as

I am emptiness,
Emptiness me.

'DUGMDOR BSDU NA, RANG BZHIN GYIS STONG PA LA RGYU 'BRAS
THAMS CAD 'THAD, MTHA' GNYIS LA MA LHUNG BA ZHIG BYUNG NA
LTA BA'I GOL SA GZHAN MI 'BYUNG GSUNGS,

In short, concluded our Lama, the laws of cause and effect are all totally proper for any entity which is empty of any natural existence. If you can just keep yourself from falling into the two extremes, you will make no great other blunders in your effort to develop correct view.

PRACTICE

XIX. Put Into Practice What You Have Learned

BZHI PA NGES PA RNYED NAS SGRUB PA LA BSKUL BAR GDAMS PA NI,

We have now reached the last, the fourth part to our overall explanation of the actual body of the text. It consists of some strong words of encouragement—that the reader should try to recognize the truth of these instructions and then actually go and practice them. As the final verse of the root text says,

,DE LTAR LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM GSUM GYI,
,GNAD RNAMS RANG GIS JI BZHIN RTOGS PA'I TSE,
,DBEN PA BSTEN TE BRTZON 'GRUS STOBS BSKYED NAS,

,GTAN GYI 'DUN MA MYUR DU SGRUBS SHIG BU,
,ZHES PAS BSTAN TE,

(14)

**When you've grasped as well as I the essential points
Of each of the three principal paths explained,
Then go into isolation, my son, make mighty
Efforts, and quickly win your ultimate wish.**

DE LTAR LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM PA GSUM GYI GNAD RNAMS THOS
BYUNG GIS RTOGS NAS, BSAM BYUNG GI BLOS NGES SHES RNYED PA'I
MTSAMS SU TSE 'DI'I 'KHRI BA BCAD, 'DOD CHUNG CHOG SHES DANG ,
DON NYUNG BYA NYUNG LA GNAS TE DBEN PA'I GNAS SU BRTZON
'GRUS KYI STOBS BSKYED NAS TSE RABS GTAN GYI 'DUN MA DE PHYI
BSHOL GYI DBANG DU MI GTONG BAR MYUR DU SGRUBS SHIG BU ZHES
RANG CAG RJES 'JUG RNAMS LA THUGS BRTZE BA CHEN POS GCES PAR
GDAMS PA YIN,

This verse is a very personal instruction that Lord Tsongkapa, out of deepest feelings of love, has granted to all of us who hope to follow him. He is saying to us, "Go first and try to grasp the essential points of the three principal paths as I have explained them above; do so by listening to teachings on them over and over again.

"Then use contemplation to gain a recognition of the truth of these points; do this in retreat, staying in a state of isolation where you cut all ties to this life, and live according to the principle of having few material wants and being satisfied with whatever you have—keep your concerns and activities few. Make mighty efforts at this practice; act quickly, never lose yourself to putting off your practice; and then win, my son, the ultimate wish of all your many lifetimes."

RJE'I GSUNG 'DI TZAM LA YANG GNAD CHEN PO YOD DE, DBEN PA
ZHES PA PHYI'I SDOD SA'I GNAS 'DU 'DZIS DBEN PA DANG , NANG GI
SEMS CHOS BRGYAD DANG RNAM RTOG MANG POS RGYAL KHAM
BSKOR BA DE TSO LAS DBEN PA'I DON,

There are profound essential points even within these words the Lord has used about essential points. The word "isolation," for example, is meant to refer to isolating yourself not only on the outside—staying in some place far from the

hustle and bustle of life—but within your own mind: keep your mind from making its usual intercontinental tour of the eight worldly thoughts and your thousand daily hopes and fears.[172]

BRTZON 'GRUS KYANG MI DGE BA LA 'BAD PA CHEN PO BYED PA
BRTZON 'GRUS SU MI 'GRO , DGE BA LA SPRO BZHIN DU BRTZON PA
DGOS,

"Making efforts" has its own special meaning: we don't say for example that you are "making efforts" when you are trying your hardest to do some bad deed. Real "efforts" are those you make with an enthusiasm for good.

GTAN GYI 'DUN MA NI 'DI NAS SANGS RGYAS PA'I BAR GYI DON LA BYA
BAS, DE SGRUB PA YANG TSE LA NGES PA MED PAS MYUR DU 'BUNGS
SHIG CES GSUNGS PA RED,

"Your ultimate wish" in a sense really starts from now, and continues on up to the point where you become a Buddha yourself. And what the verse is saying is that you must put all your strength into winning your goal now, quickly, for you cannot be sure how many days are left in your life.

BRTZON 'GRUS KYI STOBS BSKYED LUGS KYANG RANG RE RNAMS KYIS
DE RING MTSAMS BSNYEN SGRUB LTA BU'I 'GO BTZUGS NA DO NUB
TZAM NAS LHA'I ZHAL GZIGS LUNG BSTAN RMI LTAS TSUN CHAD KYI
SGRUB RTAGS THON RGYU'I RE BA BYED PA

Just what does it mean to "make mighty efforts?" People like you and I can start a practice in the morning, like going into retreat to gain a special relationship with some holy being, and by the time evening comes around we begin looking for some mystical sign that the practice is having its effect—we expect by then to meet some deity face to face, or hear some voice that tells us we are going to get enlightened on such and such a date, or have some special dream or vision.

DE 'DRAS CHOS MI YONG BAS DE LTA BU MA YIN PAR, STON PA THUGS
RJE CAN GYIS KYANG SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG BSKAL PA GRANGS
MED GSUM DU BSGRUBS PAR GSUNGS NA NGAS SKYE BA 'BUM PHRAG
TZAM DU BSGRUB DGOS PA BYUNG YANG BSGRUB NUS SNYAM PAR
BYAS TE,

But that's not what religious practice is all about. The scriptures say that even our

compassionate Teacher, the Lord Buddha, had to practice for three "countless" eons[173] before he attained the state of enlightenment. You and I then have to think to ourselves, "I am ready to spend no less than a hundred thousand lifetimes in my practice, if this is what it takes."

BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA LA THOS BSAM SGOM GSUM YUN
BSRINGS TE LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM GSUM GYI NYAMS RTOGS BZANG
PO RAB ZHAG SKYED, 'BRING ZLA SKYED, THA MAR LO SKYED THON PA
ZHIG AE YONG BLTA DGOS,

We must spend much time in learning, and reasoning out, and then meditating on the various Steps on the path to Buddhahood. To do this we have to set a goal for ourselves, for practicing and then fully realizing the three principal paths: we have to say, "At best, I am going to gain them in a day. If it takes me a month, I'll consider it average. But at the very least I will see that I have them within this year."

BJA' GDAMS PA'I DGE BSHES DOL PAS KYANG , LAM RIM LAM RIM ZHES
PA DE'ANG TSIG GSUM YIN, MIG RGYANG BSRING , BLO RGYA BSKYED,
KHONG GSANG LHOD,

We should follow the words of Geshe Dolpa, one of the Seers of the Word, who said:

Steps of the path! Steps of the path!
They all come down to three short words:
"Look far ahead,"
"Think very big,"
"Keep a pace." [174]

CES GSUNGS PA LTAR MIG RGYANG BSRING STE SANGS RGYAS KYI SAR
'GRO BA'I 'DUN PA BTANG , BLO RGYA BSKYED DE NGAS SANGS RGYAS
KYI GO 'PHANG DE SKYES BU GSUM DANG , SNGAGS BSKYED RDZOGS
KYI LAM LA RIM GYIS SBYANGS TE NGES PAR THOB PAR BYA DGOS
BSAM PAR BYED,

What he meant by the expression "Look far ahead" was that we should set our sights on becoming a Buddha. "Thinking big" means we should think to ourselves, "To reach my enlightenment, I'm going to practice absolutely all the paths, one by one: those of the three increasing scopes, and those of the secret

teaching—the levels of creation and completion."

DE YANG 'JIG RTEN LA MI TSE LO GCIG LAS MI SDOD PA ZHIG YIN YANG
SHES RGYUD NGANG RING POS LO BRGYA TZAM SDOD RTZIS KYI
GRABS BYED, CHOS LA NGED TSO SHES RGYUD NGANG THUNG THUNG
BYAS TE, THOS BSAM SGOM GSUM DANG , MA MTHAR KHA TON BZLAS
BRJOD PHRAN BU RE BYED KHUL BYAS PA TSUN CHAD GANG NYUNG
SHOS, GANG LAS SLA SHOS SHIG LA 'DAM GA BTANG NAS NGAS 'DI
TZAM MA GTOGS GA NAS NUS SNYAM DU SHES RGYUD NGANG THUNG
THUNG BYED KYANG ,

Now in the worldly side of things, people who know they must die within the year still make grand plans and act as if they're going to live a hundred. In the spiritual side of things, you and I are the opposite: we set our sights as low as we can when it comes to the threefold practice of learning, contemplating and meditating—even down to the few prayers we're supposedly reciting daily. We always pick out the easiest practice possible—we always think small, we think "This is about all I could manage."

DE LTAR MIN PAR RANG GIS BYAS NA SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG
YANG NGES PAR 'THOB NUS TE, SPYOD 'JUG LAS,

But you're wrong: if you really put forth the effort, there's no question that you can even become a Buddha. As *The Bodhisattva's Life* says,

,BDAG GIS BYANG CHUB GA LA ZHES,
,SGYID LUG PAR NI MI BYA STE,
, 'DI LTAR DE BZHIN GSHEGS PA NI,
,BDEN PA GSUNG BAS BDEN 'DI GSUNGS,

Don't be a quitter, and think to yourself
"How could I ever become a Buddha?"
Those who've Gone That Way only speak
The truth, and this is a truth they spoke:

,SBRANG BU SHA SBRANG BUNG BA DANG ,
,DE BZHIN SRIN BUR GANG GYUR PA,
,DES KYANG BRTZON PA'I STOBS BSKYED NA,
,BYANG CHUB THOB DKA' BLA MED 'THOB,

"Even those who live as bugs,
Flies or gnats, and even germs,
Reach matchless, hard-won Buddhahood
If they really make an effort."

,BDAG LTA RIGS KYI MIR SKYES LA,
,PHAN DANG GNOD PA NGO SHES NAS,
,BYANG CHUB SPYOD PA MA BTANG NA,
,BDAG GIS BYANG CHUB CIS MI 'THOB,
,CES GSUNGS,

Here am I born as a man,
Able to tell what's right and wrong;
What's to keep me from getting enlightened
If I keep on acting an enlightened way?[175]

DES NA 'JIG RTEN LA BLO RGYA GANG CHUNG DANG , CHOS LA BLO
RGYA GANG CHE CHE BYAS TE CHOS BSGRUB DGOS,

Therefore you should think as small as you can in your worldly work, but as BIG
as you can in your spiritual.

KHONG GSANG LHOD CES PA SKABS RER BRTZON PA SHUGS DRAG
BSKYED, SKABS RER SKYID NYAL BAG YANGS BYAS TE CHOS BSKYUR
GCIG BYED PA DE 'DRA MIN PAR, DGE SBYOR LA BRTZON 'GRUS THANG
LHOD RAN PA ZHIG GI THOG NAS NYAMS LEN CHU BO'I RGYUN LTAR
BSKYANGS PAS DAL BA'I RTEN LA SNYING PO RAB TU LON PA ZHIG CI
NAS KYANG MDZAD DGOS PA YIN GSUNGS,

Now the words "Keep a pace" mean that you should avoid the kind of practice
where you go back and forth between making fierce efforts at it and then letting
it go completely—laying around and doing nothing. You should rather keep a
steady pace in the effort you give your spiritual practice: let it flow on constant,
like some great river. Do anything in your power, our Lama concluded, to draw
the very essence from this life of opportunity.

IN CONCLUSION

XX. The Conclusion of the Explanation

GSUM PA BSHAD PA MTHAR PHYIN PA MJUG GI BYA BA NI,
ZHEs PA 'DI NI MANG DU THOS PA'I DGE SLONG BLO BZANG
GRAGS PA'I DPAL GYIS TSA KHO DBON PO NGAG DBANG GRAGS
PA LA GDAMS PA'O,
,ZHEs PA'I MDZAD BYANG GIS BSTAN PA YIN,

This brings us to the last of the major divisions of the work: closing remarks that come with the conclusion of our explanation of the text. These are indicated in the colophon that appears after the last verse of the root text:

These instructions were imparted to Ngawang Drakpa, a friar from the Tsako district, by that very learned Buddhist monk, the glorious Lobsang Drakpa.[176]

DE LTAR LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM GSUM LA THOS BSAM GYI NGES SHES
DPYIS PHYIN PA'I 'OG TU, RTOGS PA DON DU GNYER BA DAG GIS BSGOM
STE DMIGS PA SKYONG BAR 'DOD NA,

Now some of you, by listening and thinking carefully about the three principal paths as we've explained them above, might finally have come to some real recognition of what they mean—and you may wish to go on to the next step: meditating on these paths, so you can actually grow them in your mind. Here you will need to know the proper series of visualizations.[177]

GZHUNG 'DI'I THOG MAR, RJE BTZUN BLA MA RNAMS LA PHYAG 'TSAL
LO, , ZHEs PAS SNGON 'GRO TSOGS ZHING GSAL 'DEBS DANG , BSAGS
SBYANG SOGS BYA DGOS PAR DON GYIS BSTAN PA LTAR SBYOR CHOS
SOGS BDE MYUR LTAR DANG ,

The very first line of the root text, "I bow to all the high and holy lamas," tells us—in an indirect way—the first steps we will have to take. These will include visualizing the traditional assembly of holy beings, what we call the "Collection Field,"[178] as well as going through the practices of collecting great loads of good deeds, and purifying ourselves of our bad deeds. In short, we will have to use one of the "preliminary practice" or similar texts, related either to *Path of Bliss* or *Quick Path*. [179]

KUN SLONG GI DMIGS SKOR DU'ANG LAM GYI LUS YONGS RDZOGS
GSAL 'DEBS DGOS, KUN SLONG KHYAD PAR CAN BYANG CHUB KYI
SEMS KYIS ZIN PA'I SGO NAS DAL 'BYOR DON CHEN RNYED DKA' SOGS

BSAMS PAS DE DAG CHUNG 'BRING GI LAM DNGOS SU MI 'GYUR BAR
THUN MONG BAR 'GYUR BA'I KHYAD PAR THON PA 'ONG ,

Even just in the sections there where you raise a correct motivation, you are going to have to do a complete mental review of the entire length of the path, from beginning to end. This means that you will also be giving thought to those Steps of the path where you try to recognize how valuable your life of leisure and fortune is, how hard such a life is to find, and so on. There is a very important difference here if, as you go along in the meditation, you keep your mind filled with a truly exceptional motivation—the wish to become a Buddha for every living being, the attitude of the highest scope. Then the realizations that come to you at these particular Steps will be for you paths that you merely share with people of the lesser and medium scopes, rather than the actual paths or attitudes as these people have them.[180]

SKYABS YUL BDE MYUR LTAR RAM 'DI'I TSOGS ZHING LTAR GANG BYED
KYANG CHOG, BDUD RTZI 'OD ZER LA 'KHRIL TE 'BEBS PA'I LUGS DANG ,
'OD KYI SBU GU LAS 'BEBS PA'I LUGS GNYIS YOD,

When you come to the part where you go for refuge, you can use either system—the one in *Path of Bliss* and *Quick Path* or the one from the Collection Field painting related to this teaching—for visualizing the beings who are going to shelter you. There are two ways as well of picturing how the ambrosia descends from them to purify you: it can pulse or twist down along the outside of a light ray, or else flow down to you through the inside of a tube-like ray.

SDIG SGRIB RNAMS RTZA BA SNYING DBUS KYI BDAG GCES 'DZIN LAS
BYUNG BA MTSON PHYIR SNYING GAR NAG PHUNG NGER YOD PAR
BSAM PA YIN,

What the ambrosia has to purify is our past bad deeds and all the things that block our spiritual progress. The root of all these problems is the tendency we have, at the very bottom of our hearts, to cherish ourselves rather than others. Therefore you imagine all the bad deeds and blocks piled in a pitch-black lump in this same place: within your heart.

DE DAG BDUD RTZIS DED PAS SA 'OG NAS 'CHI BDAG PHAG MO NAG
PO'I RNAM PAR RANG SROG LA RNGAMS STABS KYIS 'ONGS PA'I KHAR
SONG BAS KHO TSIMS NAS NAM YANG MI 'TSE BAR BYAS SONG BSAM
PA GNAD CHE,

The ambrosia-light drops through your body and forces all the blackness down ahead of it. Underground, sitting below you, is the lord of Death in the form of a huge black sow.[181] She has come because she hungers for your life, and her jaws are opened wide, pointed up, waiting. It is extremely important at this point that you imagine the blackness dropping into her open mouth—that it satisfies her fully, and that she will never again seek to harm you.

SKYABS 'GRO'I RGYU GNYIS BCOS MA TZAM DU SONG NA SKYABS 'GRO
YANG DE DANG 'DRA,

As you take your refuge, you keep your mind on the two reasons for doing so.[182] If these two feelings are for you just artificial, and forced, your refuge will be no better. But if they are true feelings, your refuge too will be true.

DE GNYIS MTSAN NYID PA ZHIG BYUNG NA SKYABS 'GRO YANG MTSAN
NYID PA ZHIG 'BYUNG , SEMS BSKYED 'BRAS BU LAM BYED KYI SKABS
BCUD KYI SDIG SGRI B SBYANGS PAS SNOD KYI SKYON RNAMS KYANG
DE'I BDAG 'BRAS YIN PAS SBYANG BAR BSAM DGOS, 'DI GNAD CHE BA
RGYUD SDE CHEN PO'I DKYIL 'KHOR RGYAL MA CHOG DANG KHUNGS
'DRA BA YIN,

At the stage in your meditation where you practice the wish to become enlightened for every living being, there is a point where you imagine that you have already reached the goal, in order to help you actually do so later. Here you visualize that all the inhabitants of the universe are pure, free of any bad deeds or spiritual obstacles. The universe itself, the place which these beings inhabit, is a product of their collective deeds—and so you must imagine that it too is completely pure. This instruction is of high importance; it comes from the same source as the holy practices in the great secret traditions where you become the lord of a mystical world.

TSAD MED SKABS TSANGS PA'I GNAS PA BZHI TZAM MIN PAR SNYING
RJE CHEN PO, BYAMS PA CHEN PO SOGS KYI KHYAD PAR YOD TSUL
YANG SHES DGOS,

Next in the meditation you come to the practice of the "immeasurables";[183] here you must be aware that they are not just what they call the "four places of the Pure One," but rather something quite different. The compassion, for example, is not just that ordinary type: it is Great Compassion. And the loving-

kindness is Great Loving-Kindness.

BTANG SNYOMS SNGON DU BYED PA RGYU 'BRAS MAN NGAG BDUN
GYI SKABS LTAR GNAD CHE,

As for the order of the four immeasurables, it is important that you meditate first on the feeling of neutrality towards all beings; this then matches the feeling's position in the seven-part, cause-and-effect instruction for developing the wish to become a Buddha for every living being.

KHYAD PAR GYI SEMS BSKYED 'DI SEMS BSKYED DNGOS MIN YANG
SEMS BSKYED SPEL BA LA KHYAD CHE BA YOD,

The next section in the meditation is the one we call the "special wish for Buddhahood." [184] It is not the wish itself, but it is very effective in furthering one's development of the wish.

TSOGS ZHING SKABS, DPAG BSAM GYI SHING NI RANG GI BSOD NAMS
DANG TSOGS ZHING RNAMS KYI THUGS BSKYED ZUNG 'BREL LAS
BYUNG BA RED, SKU MDOG DKAR POR BYED PA SGRIK GNYIS DAG PA'I
KHYAD PAR MTSON,

Here are some notes about the next step in the meditation, where you visualize the "Collection Field." There is a magical tree at the base of the picture, a tree that gives you whatever you wish. You should imagine that it has grown from a union of your own merit and the enlightenment-wish of the beings of the assemblage. Lord Tsongkapa, at the center of the group, is white; this symbolizes the quality he possesses and which we would like to achieve: cleaning ourselves of both kinds of obstacles—those that prevent us from reaching nirvana and those that prevent us from reaching total enlightenment.

G-YON GYI GLEGS BAM STONG PHRAG BRGYAD PAR GSAL DGOS PA
GDUL BYA DBANG PO RNO RTUL GYI KHYAD PAR DANG DGOS PA YOD
PAR YONGS 'DZIN RDO RJE 'CHANG GI GSUNG RGYUN YIN PAR GSUNGS
GSUNGS,

To Lord Tsongkapa's own left is a volume of scripture, which you should visualize as the *Eight Thousand Verses* on the perfection of wisdom. [185] This is meant to symbolize the varying levels and needs that various disciples have, depending on how sharp their intellects are. These points, our Lama told us,

were an oral teaching from his own teacher, the Great Tutor—the Holder of the Diamond.[186]

GLEGS BAM GYIS RANG SGRA SGROGS TSUL LA'ANG NGES 'BYUNG
DANG SEMS BSKYED TSUL SOGS RANG GIS GANG NYAMS SU LEN PA
DE'I SGRA SGROGS PAR BSAM DGOS, SEMS DPA' SUM BRTZEGS KYI
GNAD KYANG GSUNGS,

The volume of scripture in your meditation is speaking out loud, relating to you its contents. You should imagine that the book is talking about the very practices you are working on—renunciation, the wish to become a Buddha for all beings, and so on. Our Lama went on to give us some special instructions on the "threefold being," where we picture a holy being inside Lord Tsongkapa's heart, and yet another holy being within this being's heart.

NYAMS LEN BYIN BRGYUD SKABS MKHYEN SRID MA LTAR LA, RDO RJE
'CHANG MA GTOGS GZHAN THAMS CAD 'JAM DBYANGS KYI RNAM PAR
BSAM, BLA MCHOD SKABS KYI NYAMS LEN BYIN BRGYUD KYANG
PHYAG CHEN DANG 'BREL MA 'BREL GYI KHYAD PAR YOD,

When you visualize the teachers of what we call the "Blessings for Practice" lineage, you should follow the verses known as "Knowledge Unlocks the World".[187] Here you picture that all these figures, with the exception of the Holder of the Diamond, appear in the form of Gentle Voice. When you visualize this same lineage in the meditation from the Offering to Lamas manual,[188] there is a distinction of whether you involve it with the practice of the Great Seal or not.

YI DAM SOGS BDE MYUR LTAR YIN PAS MDUN PHYOGS BLA MED, G-YAS
PHYOGS RNAL 'BYOR RGYUD, RGYAB PHYOGS SPYOD RGYUD, G-YON
PHYOGS BYA RGYUD DAM,

The tutelary deities and similar beings in the visualization are pictured according to *Path of Bliss* and *Quick Path*. This means that in front you have those who belong to the group of secret teachings known as the "Unsurpassed." To the center figure's own right are those of the "Master Practitioner" group; to the rear are those of the "Activity" group, and to the left those of the "Action" group.[189]

YANG NA MDUN DU GSANG 'DUS, G-YAS SU 'JIGS BYED, G-YON DU BDE
MCHOG, RGYAB PHYOGS SU KYEE RDOR SOGS DANG , DE'I PHYIR RIM

BZHIN RNAL 'BYOR RGYUD, SPYOD RGYUD, BYA RGYUD SOGS GSAL
'DEBS,

You can do this visualization another way too. Picture the divine being known as "Secret Collection" at the front. On the central figure's right is "Frightener," on the left is "Highest Bliss," and at the back is "Lo Diamond," or the like. Outside of them then come deities of the Master Practitioner group, and outside of them those of the Activity group, then the Action group, and so on.[190]

KHRUS KHANG PHYOGS BZHIR BSKYED PA DANG , SHAR PHYOGS SU
BSKYED PA, LHO PHYOGS SU BSKYED PA STE LUGS GSUM YOD, TSOGS
ZHING RE RE'I SPYAN SNGAR RANG LUS GSUM GSUM DU SPROS, 'DI
SOGS RANG LUS MANG POR SPRO BA SA THOB PA'I SKABS RANG LUS
MANG POR SPRUL NAS 'GRO DON BYED PA'I SMIN BYED DU'ANG 'GRO,

There are three different ways of visualizing the crystal bath house when you come to the part where you imagine that you are washing the body of each of the holy beings as an offering to him. You can make a house appear in each of the four directions, or to the east, or else to the south. At this point you see yourself sending out copies of yourself, so that three of you stand before each member of the assembly. The act of emanating out many bodies of yourself here and at other places in the meditation has an additional benefit: it serves to ripen the potential in you of actually learning to emanate yourself. You will gain this ability when you reach the various bodhisattva levels, and use it for the good of others.

,GSOL 'DEBS SKABS SU 'DIR MKHYEN SRID MA GTZO BOR BYED DGOS,
GTZO BO'I SKU LA LUS DKYIL BLA MCHOD LTAR BKOD KYANG CHOG,

When you get to the final preliminary practice, the supplication, you should use mainly the text of "Knowledge Unlocks the World." It's permissible here if you wish to picture the central figure with a "body mandala"—a complete secret world and its inhabitants, all part of his own body. Use the one that you find in the *Offering to Lamas*. [191]

SBYOR DNGOS MJUG GSUM GZHAN RNAMS KYANG TSANG MA LAM
KHRID LAS BYUNG BA LTAR 'DIR SBYAR ZHING , MJUG TU, DGE 'DIS
MTSON NAS DUS GSUM DANG 'BREL BA'I, , ZHES SOGS KYI SMON LAM
YANG BGYIS NA LEGS,

For all the other parts of the meditation—whether they relate to preliminaries, to

the main meditation itself, or to its proper conclusion—you should refer to the various texts on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood and apply the appropriate sections. It is very good if, at the very conclusion of your meditation session, you can recite a closing prayer starting with the line, "May this good deed, standing for whatever ones are done..."[192]

DE LTAR LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM GSUM 'DI'I KHRID KYANG BYANG
CHUB SEMS KYI MNGA' BDAG MGON PO GSER GLING PA DANG ZHAL
MI GNYIS PA BDAG GI SKYABS MGON BLA MA RIN PO CHE'I ZHAL SNGA
NAS DANG , SKYABS RJE SGRUB KHANG RDO RJE 'CHANG MTSAN BRJOD
PAR DKA' BA BLO BZANG NGAG DBANG BSTAN 'DZIN RGYA MTSO DPAL
BZANG PO SOGS MKHAS GRUB DAM PA MANG PO'I DRUNG NAS RTZA
'GREL GNYIS KA'I THOG NAS YANG YANG THOB PA LAS,

I have been fortunate enough, our Lama concluded, to receive these instructions on the *Three Principal Paths*—on both the verses of the text and their commentary—at the feet of many saintly, accomplished sages. I heard them from the holy lips of my own precious Lama, my protector and savior, who is the lord of the wish to achieve Buddhahood for all beings, and who was one and the same with the savior Serlingpa.[193] And I heard them from my refuge and lord, the Holder of the Diamond from Drupkang, whose blessed name my lips are hardly worthy to pronounce: the good and glorious Lobsang Ngawang Tenzin Gyatso.

DA RES 'DIR LAM GTZO'I RTZA TSIG 'DI'I STENG NAS ZAB KHRID MDOR
BSDUS TZAM PHUL ZIN PA YIN PAS, GANG ZHUS PA DE DAG TSANG
MAS PHYAG LEN LA THEBS PA ZHIG CIS KYANG NAS BKA' DRIN
SKYONG BAR MDZOD,

I have tried here to offer you but a very brief teaching on the three principal paths, using the lines of the root text as our guide. I beseech every person here, please be so very kind, as to take what I have offered in my words and put it into actual practice, to the absolute best that you can.

BDAG GIS JI SNYED SOGS BCAS DGYES BZHIN DU BKA' DRIN STZAL TO, ,

Thus did our Lama bless us, and with joy then uttered the verse with which we dedicate a great good deed, to the good of every living being.[194]

PRAYER

XXI. A Disciple's Prayer

,DIR SMON PA,
,RGYAL BA'I DGONGS ZAB MGON PO BYAMS PA DANG ,
,JAM DBYANGS LAS 'ONGS TSUL GNYIS BSTAN PA'I SROL,
,DZIN LA DUS GSUM RGYAL BA'I PHRIN LAS NI,
,RGYA MTSO RAB 'BYAMS SPRO DANG SDUD MDZAD RGYAL,

He's the lord who stages and then withdraws the
show, a myriad *ocean*
Of mighty deeds the Victors in all three times
perform to *keep*
The teaching tradition that joins both ways,
those passed from Gentle Voice
And from the savior *Loving One*, the deep thought
of the Victors.[195]

,MNYAM MED STOBS BCU'I DPAL GYI THUGS GSANG MDZOD,
,GANG LA BR TEN PA MKHYEN GTER SMRA BA'I LHA,
,BLO BZANG GRAGS SNYAN RAB 'BAR ZHAL SGO LAS,
,SKYUGS PA'I DAM CHOS RIN CEN SRID 'DIR LHAM,

He's a god who goes to the matchless mystery
of his mind, a treasure
Resplendent with all ten forces, to speak
the gold mine of the sages;
He's Lobsang Drakpa, of shining fame, and
into this world came
The jewels of the holy dharma spewed out
from his lips.[196]

,RGYAL BA'I YAB KYIS RGYAL SRAS BYIS PA'I SKUR,
,NYER BSTAN BRGYAD KHRI'I GSUNG GSANG DVANGS MA'I KHU,
,SNYING POR BSDUS LA LAM GTZO RNAM GSUM ZHES,
,DRI MED BSTAN PA'I MKHA' LA NYI LTAR GRAGS,

He's the revered father of all Victors; in the
form of their son, a child[197]
Gave a teaching that draws the essence of

the nectar from the cream
Of the eighty thousand,[198] the mystery of
the Buddhas' speech: we call it
Three Principal Paths, well-known as the sun
in the sky of the immaculate Word.

,ZAB ZAB PHYOGS RE'I TSIG GIS MTSON MIN PA'I,
,YONGS RDZOGS LAM BZANG DON GYI BRGYUD PA YI,
,NYAMS RTOGS GDAMS PA'I GTER BRGYA RDOL BA'I SGRAS,
,SRID ZHI'I KHONG KUN DGE BA'I SNYAN PA 'DZIN,

His lines are none of those empty words,
supposedly deep, incomplete,
But rather spout a thousand riches, advice
from experience
Of each step of the meaning itself, the
high paths in their entirety,
Capturing the glory of good of the world
or peace, wherever.[199]

,MKHAS BYA'I GNAS LA MI 'JIGS DPA' PO YIS,
,MDO RGYUD TSAD MA'I GZHUNG BZANG GNAM RU CHER,
,DZAM GLING MKHAS SROL RIGS PA'I NYAG PHRAN DAG
,SBYOR BAS LOG SMRA'I SNYING LA 'BIG PAR MDZOD,

Come great warrior, who has no fear of what
will make him wise;
Take up the bow of these wonderful books, the
true Word, open and secret;
Use it with the feathered shafts of reasoning,
way of the wise
Throughout the world, pierce the hearts of
those who would teach wrong.

,SRID PA'I BDE LA SRED PAS 'KHYUD PA'I DPAL,
,GTAN BDE'I GSHED MA GTAN GYI MDZA' GROGS SU,
,BRDZU BA'I 'DI SNANG BYA BA KUN BTANG NAS,
,TSE LHAG DON LDAN BYED PAR NAM ZHIG 'GYUR,

When will I decide to give the rest of my

life some meaning?
When will I throw away this lie of
happiness in this life,
The shining embrace of grabbing after
good things in this world,
My forever friend, the foe of my
forever happiness.

, 'DI DANG PHYI MAR SKU GNYIS SGRUB PA'I THABS,
, 'PHRAL DANG YUN GYI RGYU TSOGS MI DMAN ZHING ,
, RANG DANG GZHAN YANG LAM BZANG BGROD PA'I MIG
, MKHAS DANG GRUB PA'I RJES SU GTOD NA MDZES,

In this and my future lives may I never
fail to collect
More of the short and long-term causes
which bring me both the bodies;[200]
May I win the beauty of eyes that guide
myself and others too
On the excellent paths, fixed upon
the wise and adept ahead.

, 'DI LTA BDAG 'DRA'I KHUR DU BZOD MIN YANG ,
, 'DI 'BAD DAM PA'I LEGS BSHAD RI MOR 'PHOS,
, 'DI YI TSIG DON SUG PAS NYEN PA SOGS,
, 'DI LA NONGS MCHIS BLA MA'I SPYAN SNGAR 'CHAGS,

This is not a load that the likes of me
could ever bear,
But I've tried my best to put his eloquence
down in black and white.
I may have slipped, and lost some words
or meaning, or the like;
I kneel before my Lama and freely admit
any errors made.

, DE SLAD 'DI BSGRUBS KYIS MTSON RNAM DKAR MTHUS,
, RANG GZHAN YONGS KYI BLO KHA CHOS LA PHYOGS,
, TSE 'DI'I 'KHRI BA CHOD NAS DAL 'BYOR LA,
, SNYING PO MCHOG TU LON PA'I RGYUR GYUR CIG,

By the pure white force in deeds like this
endeavor I've completed
May my thoughts, those of others too, all turn
to the holy dharma.
May it come to cause us all to cut what
ties us to this life,
And help us take best essence from the time
and chance we have.

CES PA 'DI NI, RJE BLA MA BKA' DRIN GSUM LDAN KHYAB BDAG 'KHOR
LO'I MGON PO RDO RJE 'CHANG PHA BONG KHA PA DPAL BZANG PO'I
ZHAL SNGA NAS, LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM GSUM RTZA TSIG GI STENG
NAS ZAB KHRID LAN MANG DU NOS

So this is the teaching on the three principal paths given by our lord and lama,
the one who granted us all three kinds of kindness,[201] our savior, the god who
stood at the center of our universe, the Holder of the Diamond himself, the good
and glorious Pabongka. He bestowed upon us many times this profound
instruction, using the words of the root text as a guide.

SKABS KYI ZIN BRIS KHA 'THOR SNGA PHYI KHAG LNGA TZAM YOD
PA RNAMS, PHA BLA MA BKA' DRIN 'KHOR MED CHEN PO'I ZHABS RDUL
SPYI BOR LEN PA'I BKA' 'BANGS YONGS KYI THA SHAL BAN GZUGS
CHOS MED NAD PA 'DAN GRVA SU DHA'I BADZRSA, RNAM 'DREN DAM
PA GANG DES YUN RING MO'I BAR DU BYIN GYIS BRLABS SHING , DUS
PHYIS RJE DE NYID KYI SKU RUS RING BSREL RIN PO CHE BYIN RLABS
KYI GZI 'OD 'BAR BA DNGOS SU BZHUGS PA'I DBEN PA'I GNAS MCHO
G BKRA SHIS CHOS GLING DU BSGRIGS PA

Various records were made on the different occasions that he delivered this
teaching; there were five such manuscripts in the hands of different people. They
have been compiled here by myself, Suddhi Vadzra,[202] a monk from the
monastery of Den, a man who ails from his lack of spiritual knowledge, a mere
pretender dressed in robes, the very lowest of the whole great circle of disciples
who have reverently bowed and touched their heads at the holy dust upon the
feet of the great Lama, our dear father, whose kindness defies repayment.

I was able to complete this work because of the blessings of this highest of guides
himself; those received during the many years I spent at his side while he was

living, and those which even now emanate from his remains, his precious relics.

I have written these pages where those relics themselves reside, bathed in the light that blazes from them, at that holy hermitage known as Tashi Chuling.[203]

'GRO DON 'PHEL, , , ,

May it help all living beings!

A SECRET KEY

XXII. A Secret Key to the Three Principal Paths

'LAM GTZO'I ZIN BRIS GSANG BA'I LDE MIG NI,

Here is a "Secret Key to the Three Principal Paths,"
consisting of notes composed by Gungtang.[204]

MCHOD BRJOD KYIS RTZA BA BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL DANG SBYOR
BA'I CHOS DRUG BSTAN,

The opening line of Lord Tsongkapa's *Three Principal Paths*, what we call the "offering of praise," is meant to indicate the root of all successful practice—proper reliance on a spiritual teacher—and the six preliminaries.[205]

RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB KUN GYI SNYING PO'I DON, , ZHES SOGS LAM
GYI GTZO BO GSUM LA SO SOR SBYOR TSUL DANG THUN MONG DU
SBYOR TSUL GNYIS, BSHAD TSE GO RIM YOD KYANG BSGOM TSE GCIG
GIS GCIG ZIN DGOS PA RJES MA GNYI GA'I MTSAMS SBYAR GYIS SHES TE,
DE MA BYAS NA DANG PO'I NGES 'BYUNG DE THEG CHEN GYI LAM DU
MI 'GRO,

The lines including the one that reads "The essence of all high teachings of the Victors" can be taken as applying to the three principal paths individually, or to the three as a whole. When you teach someone these three paths, you go through them one by one; but when you meditate upon them, each one must be suffused with the other two. This fact you can ascertain from the introductory reference to the latter two paths in the very first verse. If you didn't do your meditations this way, then your feelings of renunciation could not be considered a path of the greater way.

CHOS SGRUB 'DOD TZAM RE KUN LA YOD KYANG PHYI BSHOL GYIS
BSLUS PAS DAL 'BYOR DANG MI RTAG PA SBREL NAS GSUNGS,

Everyone gets the urge from time to time to do some spiritual practice, but all of us are cheated of the chance by our tendency to put our practice off for another day. This is why, in the root text, Lord Tsongkapa gives the teaching on this precious life of opportunity right together with the advices on our approaching death.

'KHOR BA'I SDUG BSNGAL THAMS CAD LAS MI DGE BA LAS BYUNG BAS
'KHOR BA'I NYES DMIGS DANG LAS 'BRAS SBREL NAS GSUNGS,

He also juxtaposes the teaching on the problems of cyclic life and the teaching on actions and their consequences—for the reason that every pain we feel in this circle of life is caused by the bad deeds we have done before.

JO BO'I LUGS DANG ZHI LHA'I LUGS BSRES PA'I SEMS SGOM TSUL
GSUNGS TE, MA RNAMS ZHES PA'I RNAMS KYI SGRAS SEMS SNYOMS PA
DANG , MA ZHES PAS MAR SHES TSIG SNGA MA'I SNYING RJE DANG ,

In the verses where he explains how to meditate on the wish for enlightenment too he manages to interweave both systems—the one taught by Lord Atisha and the one which Master Shantideva gave. The fact that the word "mothers" in these verses is plural is meant to refer to the one system, where you exchange your self-concern with a concern for others—a kind of even-mindedness.[206] The very mention of the word "mother" at all is meant to refer to the step in the other system where you recognize that all beings are your own mother. And the words that come before the mention of "mothers" are meant to bring out the step of compassion.

NGANG TSUL SNGAR PHAN BTAGS PA'I NGANG TSUL MAR SHES KYI
DRIN BSAM LUGS DANG , SLAR PHAN 'DOGS PA MNYAM PA RJE DRIN
DRAN LUGS GNYIS KYI PHYI MA 'PHRUL CHE STE, ZHING BZANG PO LA
NAS BTAB MA THUB KYI SEMS KHRAL MA GTOGS 'DI LA MANG PO BTAB
CES DRIN DU BRTZE BA MED PA LTAR SEMS CAN GYI DON BSGRUB
KYANG YUS MI 'BYUNG BA YIN,

When you "think of what's happening"[207] here you can do it two ways. You can *think of what* other beings did for you in the past when they were your

mothers; this is how you remember their kindness in the step that follows recognizing them as mothers in the first place, in the one system. On top of that you can also *think of what* other beings are doing for you even now, every day; this is how it's done in the system where you exchange yourself and others. This second way of doing it gives fantastic results: you no longer have to worry that you lost your chance to plant this fertile field by repaying their kindness then, for here they are around you, lots of fields to plant. It's only your own failure to recognize their present kindness; they are your ticket to fulfilling the needs of every living being, but you don't give them any credit for it.

,RGYU LAS BYUNG BA'I RTEN 'BREL LAS KYANG , LUGS 'DIR MDUNG
KHYIM GYI TSUL DU RGYU MANG 'BRAS BU LA BR TEN PAS LTOS NAS
BTAGS PA'I RTEN 'BREL GTZO BOR MDZAD DE

Now the concept of interdependence can refer to the fact that things come from causes. Sometimes though things can be turned all upside down, like spears that you plant points-up to support a canopy, and we can say in many cases that "causes" depend on "results." Therefore the system that we use here is based principally on interdependence in the sense of labeling due to dependence.

BTAGS PA'I TSUL YANG , SNGAR BKRA SHIS MI ZER BA'I MI GCIG LA
RANG GIS BKRA SHIS ZHES BTAGS NAS ZHAG SHAS SONG BA NA DE LA
PHAR BTAGS PA'I BLO MED PAR DE'I NGOS NAS BKRA SHIS GRUB PA
'DRA ZHIG SKYE BA'I NGANG TSUL PHRA MO 'DI RTOGS DKA' STE,
GLEGS BAM LAS NGES NGES 'DRA BA NA GRUB MTHA' 'OG MA TSO'I
BDAG MED BSHAD PA'I DON BLO NGOR AE 'DUG MAS NAS BLTAS TE MI
'DUG NA LTA BA'I PHYOGS NA MED DO, ,

How does the labeling work? Suppose there's a person who never had the name "Tashi," and then one day you go and give him the new name "Tashi." [208] After a few days you begin to forget that it was you who gave him the name "Tashi," and he starts looking like he is "Tashi" all on his own. The process by which your perception changes here is rather subtle and difficult to recognize. You can read all the books and start to think you know what no-self is, but then you've got to go back to the lower school systems and work your way up: make sure you can picture what they think "no-self" means as well. If you can't then you're probably pretty far from correct view yourself. [209]

DON DAM RTOGS PA'I SHES RAB MED NA GZHAN GNYIS KYIS MI THAR
BA BSHAD NAS DNGOS LA RTEN 'BREL GSUNGS PA 'DI GO NA GO LA,

MIN NA GNAS LUGS RTOGS PA'I SKABS MED PA LA DGONGS

Here in his verses Lord Tsongkapa first makes the statement that, unless you have the wisdom that perceives ultimate reality, the other two principal paths can never free you. Then the next thing he mentions, at least directly, is interdependence. The point he is trying to make is "If you understand interdependence, you understand ultimate reality; if not, then you don't."

SHING SNANG BAS YOD MTHA' SEL BAS KYANG YIN TE, DES MED
MTHA' SEL BA MTHONG BA LA MI SKUR BA'I RGYANG PHAN YANG
'DOD NA 'DI NI THUN MONG MA YIN NO, ,

And the same can be said for grasping the fact that an understanding of the appearance of things prevents you from falling into the extreme of thinking things exist. Even a non-Buddhist school like the so-called "Cast-Offs"[210] can think the opposite: not even they make the mistake of denying that understanding the appearance of things prevents you from falling into the extreme of thinking that nothing exists. Therefore the idea that it keeps you from falling into the first extreme is truly unique.

TSIG NYUNG YANG YONGS 'DZIN RIN PO CHE'I GSUNG GI NYING KHU
BSDUS PA YIN PAS GCES PAR ZUNGS SHIG, , 'DI GUNG THANG GSUNG
LAS BRIS PA'O, ,

The above are only a few words of instruction, but they represent the concentrated essence of everything that the Master Tutor, the Precious One, has taught. Hold them therefore very dear to your heart.

'DAD DAM MTSUNGS MED GZIM LHA KLU DGA' TSAL BAS SPAR BSKRUN
MDZAD PA 'GRO DON 'PHEL, , , ,

The original woodblock printing of this text was sponsored by a devotee of matchless faith and morals, from the house of Hlalu, a veritable garden of bliss.[211] He dedicates this act to the higher good of every living being.

Notes to Reading Ten

[167.] *Once you grasp the secret...* Source of quotation not found.

[168.] *precious teacher Choney Lama*: Refers to Pabongka Rinpoche's teacher named Choney Geshe Lobsang Gyatso Trin.

[169.] *Therefore this proof employing interdependence...* Quotation from his *Entering the Middle Way*, ff. 206b-207a (entry 74).

[170.] *Everything is right...* Quotation from f. 15a of Master Nagarjuna's masterpiece (entry 4).

[171.] *Form is emptiness...* From the famous *Heart of Wisdom Sutra*, f. 259b (entry 20).

[172.] *eight worldly thoughts*: They were listed above in section VIII, on "Stopping Desire for This Life."

[173.] *three "countless" eons*: The word "countless" here actually refers to a specific number—1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. The length of an "eon" is variously described in Buddhist scripture, and is tied to cycles in the lifespans of beings; suffice to say it entails millions of years.

[174.] *Steps of the path!* Original source of quotation not found. Pabongka Rinpoche's *Liberation* twice credits the three instructions to Gompa Rinchen Lama (entry 47, ff. 168a, 334a), who is said to have been a student of Lord Atisha (see Lord Tsongkapa's *Greater Steps*, entry 61, f. 12a), and of Lord Drom Tonpa (*Blue Annals*, entry 94, p. 264). Geshe Dolpa, full name Marshurpa Rok Sherab Gyatso (1059-1131) was a student of the great Potowa and compiled his mentor's teachings into a famed text of the Seer tradition entitled the *Blue Book* (see its commentary at entry 89).

[175.] *Don't be a quitter...* From the chapter on effort in Master Shantideva's classic (f. 20a, entry 71). "Those who've Gone That Way" refers to the Buddhas.

[176.] *the glorious Lobsang Drakpa*: As mentioned in the Foreword, this was Lord Tsongkapa's ordination name.

[177.] *the proper series of visualizations*: The section that follows was included in Pabongka Rinpoche's commentary for the benefit of his disciples already familiar with the practice. It is translated here for completeness, but like any Buddhist teaching requires the personal guidance of a qualified lama for successful results.

[178.] *Collection Field*: Traditional paintings of this visualization are fairly common; one good example appears in the Newark Museum's catalogue (illustration P20, p. 170, entry 93). The name of the visualization is meant to show that these holy beings are the best field in which one can plant the seeds of his enlightenment: the two collections of merit and wisdom. The symbolism of the picture is detailed carefully by Pabongka Rinpoche in his *Liberation in Our Hands* (ff. 92-102, entry 47).

[179.] *"Path of Bliss" or "Quick Path"*: See note 119.

[180.] *attitudes as these people have them*: As mentioned above (note 20), the practitioner of lesser scope seeks to save himself from the lower realms. The practitioner of medium scope hopes to escape from all forms of suffering life, even the higher realms. The practitioner of the greatest scope shares these attitudes, but seeks equally to assure that every other being reaches these goals too.

[181.] *huge black sow*: Also stands for ignorance, the root of all our suffering.

[182.] *two reasons for taking refuge*: These are (1) to fear the lower realms and cyclic life in general, and (2) to believe that the three jewels have the power to protect you (see note 110).

[183.] *the "immeasurables"*: These are immeasurable loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and neutrality; they are described in a classic verse, respectively, as follows:

May all living beings gain happiness and
what causes happiness.

May all living beings escape suffering and
what causes suffering.

May all living beings never be without the
happiness free of every suffering.

May all living beings stay neutral, free of
all like for their friends and dislike for their enemies.

The four are called "immeasurable" because they are thoughts directed at an immeasurable number of beings, and because one gains immeasurable merit from thinking them. There is another set of four attitudes with the same names, known collectively as the "four places of the Pure One." Pabongka Rinpoche elsewhere explains that the loving-kindness of this set covers many, but not all, sentient beings, and so one who meditates upon it is born as a being like the worldly god named Pure One, whose authority extends over many, but not all, places. By focusing on all beings, one achieves nirvana "without a place" (beyond both this suffering world and a lower nirvana) as the Great Pure One (another name for a full Buddha) (see ff. 308b- 309a, entry 47).

[184.] *special wish for Buddhahood*: The lines read "For the sake of all my mother beings, I will do anything I have to in order to reach precious total enlightenment, as fast as I can. Thus I will now begin a meditation on the teaching of the Steps on the path to Buddhahood, using the profound path of practice that centers upon my lama, my god" (f. 5a, entry 26).

[185.] *Eight Thousand Verses*: One of the most famed and eloquent sutras on the perfection of wisdom, or correct view (entry 83).

[186.] *the Great Tutor, the Holder of the Diamond*: Probably refers to Pabongka Rinpoche's root master, Dakpo Lama Jampel Hlundrup.

[187.] *"Knowledge Unlocks the World"*: See note 40 on these lines composed by Lord Tsongkapa himself.

[188.] *"Offering to Lamas" manual*: See note 43; the Great Seal is a practice of the secret teachings.

[189.] *"Unsurpassed" group, etc.*: These refer to the four traditional classes of the secret teachings.

[190.] *"Secret Collection," etc.*: The beings mentioned are all forms which the Buddha takes to give the secret teachings, and belong to the "Unsurpassed" group.

[191.] *body mandala in the "Offering to Lamas"*: See pp. 44-7 of the work (entry 51).

[192.] *May this good deed...* Final verses of "Knowledge Unlocks the World" (pp. 207-8, entry 65). They read as follows:

May this good deed, standing for whatever
ones are done

By myself and others throughout all
of the three times

Never even for a single moment
in the many

Lives we take give forth its fruit
by turning into something

Which will lead us to the kinds of things
the world hopes for:

Gains that put themselves ahead, or else
some reputation,

Crowds of followers, life's enjoyments,
others' gifts and honors;

Rather may it only bring us enlightenment
unmatched.

By the wondrous blessings of the Victors
and their sons,

By the truth that interdependence
cannot ever fail,

By the might of my willingness to free
all beings myself,

May all that I have prayed for here
so purely come to pass.

[193.] *same with the savior Serlingpa*: Again refers to Pabongka Rinpoche's root teacher, Dakpo Lama Rinpoche (see note 186). Lama Serlingpa, also known as Dharmakirti (but different from the sage of the same name who composed the *Commentary on Valid Perception*), was a great master of the teachings on the wish for enlightenment. He lived in what is now Indonesia and instructed Lord Atisha for twelve years (see note 49).

[194.] *to the good of every living being*: Among the verses that Pabongka Rinpoche spoke in his final prayer of dedication was the following. It comes from the end of *The Hundred Gods of Bliss Paradise* (see entry 86), which is a lama-practice text centered on the great Tsongkapa, Lobsang Drakpa:

May whatever virtue I've collected in
this deed of mine

Be of all possible benefit to all beings
and the teachings.

Especially may it help me to illuminate
for long

The inner essence of the teachings
Lobsang Drakpa gave.

[195.] *deep thought of the Victors*: "Victors" refers to the Buddhas; in our world, the instructions of the Steps of the path to Buddhahood have been passed down along two great lineages: the Steps on correct view through disciples of Master Nagarjuna, who learned them from the divine being Gentle Voice; and the Steps on the wish for enlightenment through disciples of Master Asanga, who heard them from Loving One—the Future Buddha.

It is a tradition of Tibetan poetics to weave a great personage's name into a verse, often with special marks under the appropriate syllables. Here the italics stand for Pabongka Rinpoche's full name (see the Foreword).

[196.] *spewed out from his lips*: Poetic metaphor based on a traditional belief that the mongoose vomits up jewels. The "ten forces" are the ten supreme forms of knowledge possessed by a Buddha, such as knowing perfectly what is actual and what is not, and exactly how deeds will ripen upon a person. The words "shining fame" are a pun on the second part of Lord Tsongkapa's ordination name,

Lobsang Drakpa, since *drakpa* means "famed."

[197.] *their son, a child*: Lord Tsongkapa is said to have actually been a Buddha who appeared to his disciples in the form of a bodhisattva, or a "son of the Victors." The word "child" is an allusion to the youthful aspect in which Gentle Voice sometimes appears.

[198.] *eighty thousand*: Refers to the 84,000 different masses of teaching or "heaps of scripture" imparted by the Buddhas (see note 112).

[199.] *world or peace, wherever*: Refers in this case to the world and what transcends it.

[200.] *both the bodies*: See note 32. The mental body is caused primarily by correct view; the physical body by activities motivated by the wish for enlightenment. See also text related to note 148.

[201.] *three kinds of kindness*: In the tradition of the open teachings, a lama pays his student the kindnesses of granting him personal instructions, oral transmissions, and formal explanations of scripture. Within the secret tradition, he allows the student initiation, explanation, and advices.

[202.] *Suddhi Vadzra*: Tibetan transliteration for the Sanskrit equivalent of the name of the Tibetan editor, Lobsang Dorje. His home district was Den Ma, in the southeast of Tibet (see also Foreword).

[203.] *Tashi Chuling*: Pabongka Rinpoche's mountain hermitage; see Foreword.

[204.] *Gungtang*: Refers to Gungtang Jampeyang; see note 62. This "Key" to the *Three Principal Paths* is found in his collected works (see entry 9) and is followed by an instruction (entry 8) on how to perform a formal meditation session upon the three paths, using the lines of Lord Tsongkapa's original text.

[205.] *six preliminaries*: The six practices before a meditation session are cleaning one's room and setting up an altar, putting forth offerings, sitting in the proper posture and preparing one's mind by the thoughts of seeking refuge and the wish for enlightenment, visualizing the traditional assemblage of holy beings, going through the steps of gathering virtue and removing bad deeds, and then supplicating the lamas. See also note 177.

[206.] *a kind of even-mindedness*: The phrase itself is a double entendre, since the second system's first step is neutrality towards all beings (see section XII, "How to Develop the Wish for Enlightenment").

[207.] *"think of what's happening"*: This phrase as well is lifted from the eighth verse of Lord Tsongkapa's root text, and then played upon.

[208.] *Tashi*: A common Tibetan personal name.

[209.] *far from correct view yourself*: The tenets of the lower Buddhist schools concerning "no-self" have been explained above in section XIV, "Why You Need Correct View."

[210.] *the so-called "Cast-Offs"*: A philosophical school of ancient India, considered one of the crudest since they did not accept the concepts of past and future lives, and the relation between one's past deeds and present experiences.

[211.] *the house of Hlalu*: A well-known aristocratic family of old Tibet. Their principal holdings were located to the northwest of Lhasa, on the road to Drepung Monastery.

The following selection is from the 18th Chapter of the *Commentary on the Three Principal Paths*, written by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-1941).

LNGA PA THAL 'GYUR THUN MONG MA YIN PA'I KHYAD CHOS NI,
GZHAN YANG SNANG BAS YOD MTHA' SEL BA DANG , , STONG PAS MED
MTHA' SEL ZHING STONG PA NYID, , RGYU DANG 'BRAS BUR 'CHAR BA'I
TSUL SHES NA, , MTHAR 'DZIN LTA BAS 'PHROG PAR MI 'GYUR RO, ,
ZHES PAS BSTAN TE,

XVIII. A Unique Teaching of the "Implication" School

The fifth and final section in our explanation of correct view concerns a unique teaching followed by the "Implication" group of the Middle Way school. This instruction is contained in the following verse of the root text.

(13)

**In addition, the appearance prevents the existence extreme;
Emptiness that of non-existence, and if
You see how emptiness shows in cause and effect
You'll never be stolen off by extreme views.**

THAL 'GYUR BA MIN PA TSOS SNANG BAS MED MTHA' DANG , STONG
PAS YOD MTHA' SEL BAR BZHED KYANG ,

Now all the schools except for the members of the "Implication" group hold that an understanding of the appearance of things prevents you from falling into what we call the "extreme of thinking things do not exist," while an understanding of emptiness prevents you from falling into what is known as the "extreme of thinking things do exist."

THAL 'GYUR BA'I LUGS LA CHOS GANG DANG GANG YIN KYANG
SNANG BA TZAM LAS BDEN PAR MA GRUB PAS DON DAM DU YOD PA'I
YOD MTHA' DANG , SNANG BA TZAM DE RANG GI NGOS NAS MA GRUB
PA LA BR TEN NAS STONG PAS THA SNYAD DU MED PA'I MED MTHA' SEL
BA YIN,

The position of the Implication group though is that no particular object you can choose has any true existence, aside from merely appearing this way; and understanding this prevents you from going to the extreme of thinking things

exist—that is, exist in an ultimate way. And because this mere appearance itself cannot exist on its own, an understanding of emptiness prevents your falling into the extreme of thinking things do not exist—that is, do not exist in a conventional way.

RTEN 'BREL YIN PHYIN CHAD RANG BZHIN GYIS MA GRUB PA'AM RANG
TSUGS MA THUB PA LAS GZHAN DU 'GRO SA MED DE, GDAGS GZHI'I
TSOGS PA LA BR TEN NAS 'BYUNG DGOS PA'I PHYIR, DPER NA, MI RGAN
'KHOG GIS RANG KHER LANGS MA THUB PAR GZHAN LA BR TEN NAS
LDANG DGOS PA NI RANG GIS TSUGS MA THUB PA YIN PA LTAR RKYEN
GZHAN ZHIG LA BR TEN DGOS TSAD RANG BZHIN GYIS TSUGS MA THUB
PA YIN,

Once something is interdependent there is no possibility for it to be anything else but something which does not exist naturally—something which cannot stand on its own. This is because it must then occur in dependence on the collection of parts which serve as the basis that receives our label. Look at the example of some feeble old man, unable to rise from his chair by himself, who must seek some other support to get up—he cannot stand on his own. Here it's a similar case: no object can stand on its own, no object can exist just naturally, so long as it must depend on any other factor.

SPYIR BDAG MED PA'I DON GTAN LA 'BEB PA'I RIGS PA MANG DU YOD
KYANG , RIGS PA'I RGYAL PO LTA BU NI RTEN 'BREL GYI RIGS PA 'DI YIN,
DE YANG , MYU GU CHOS CAN, BDEN PAR MA GRUB STE, RTEN 'BREL
YIN PA'I PHYIR, CES RTAGS BKOD NA, 'DI LA PHYI ROL PAS NI CHOS
THAMS CAD SPYI GTZO BO'I RNAM 'GYUR DU 'DOD DE RTAGS MA GRUB
KYI LAN BYED,

Generally speaking, there are a great number of logical proofs that can be used when you want to establish the meaning of no self-nature. There is one though which is like the king of them all, and this is it: the "proof through interdependence." Let's say we put forth this argument to someone, and we say:

Consider a sprout.
It cannot exist truly,
For it is interdependent.

Members of certain non-Buddhist schools will answer "I disagree with your reason," which is to say, "Sprouts are not interdependent." This they must say

because they believe that every object in the universe is a manifestation of some primeval One.

BOD SNGA RABS PA PHAL CHE BAS GTAN MED DU 'DOD PAS CHAD
MTHAR LHUNG , SEMS TZAM PA MAN GYI RANG SDE DNGOS SMRA
THAMS CAD KYIS RANG BZHIN GYIS MA GRUB NA RTEN 'BREL 'JOG MA
SHES PAS RTAG MTHAR LHUNG , RANG RGYUD PAS RTEN 'BYUNG KHAS
LEN KYANG RTEN 'BREL YIN NA RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS MA GRUB
PA'I KHYAB PA MI BZHED PAS DE YANG RTAG MTHAR SONG ,

The majority of the earlier Tibetan Buddhists fell into the extreme that we call "thinking things have stopped," for they would say that if something did not exist truly it could not exist at all. The schools from the Mind-Only on down, the group of schools known collectively as the "Functionalists," all fall into the extreme of "thinking things are permanent," for they cannot explain interdependence if they accept that nothing exists naturally. Members of the "Independent" group within the Middle Way school accept the idea of interdependence, but do not agree that if something is interdependent it cannot "exist by definition." This too is tantamount to the extreme of thinking things are permanent.

MKHAS PA DBU MA PAS NI RANG BZHIN GYIS MED KYANG GTAN NAS
MED PA MA YIN PA DANG , THA SNYAD TZAM DU YOD KYANG RANG
BZHIN GYIS YOD PA MA YIN PA'I DBYE BA BZHIR PHYE, DNGOS SMRA
BA SOGS KYI 'KHRUL GZHI YOD MED BZHI PO 'DI MA PHYED PA'I SKYON
YIN,

The real sages of the Middle Way school make a fourfold distinction: they say that nothing exists naturally, but not that nothing exists at all; everything exists merely by convention, but everything exists without existing naturally. The point of error for the Functionalists and those other schools is their failure to distinguish between these four: two kinds of "nothing exists" and two kinds of "everything exists."

THAL 'GYUR BA'I LUGS LA BDEN PAR MED DE, RTEN 'BREL YIN PA'I
PHYIR, ZHES PA 'DIS RTAG CHAD KYI MTHA' GNYIS KA SEL ZHING , DE
YANG DANG POS RTAG MTHA' DANG , GNYIS PAS CHAD MTHA' SEL BA
YIN,

According to the Implication system, both extremes—thinking things are

permanent and thinking things have stopped—can be prevented with a single logical statement: "It cannot exist truly, because it is interdependent." The first part of the statement keeps us from the extreme of thinking things are permanent; the second, from the extreme of thinking things have stopped.

CO NE BLA MA RIN PO CHES 'DI GNYIS RE RES KYANG RTAG CHAD KYI
MTHA' GNYIS KA SEL BAR GSUNGS KYIN YOD, DE SEL LUGS KYANG
BDEN PAR MED DE ZHES PA'I TSIG ZIN GYIS RTAG MTHA' DANG , BDEN
PAR MED PA'I SHUGS LA SPYIR MED PA MA YIN PAR BSTAN PAS CHAD
MTHA' SEL, RTEN 'BREL YIN PA'I PHYIR ZHES PA'ANG 'DIS MTSON NUS
PAR GSUNGS,

My own precious teacher, Choney Lama, was always saying that both parts of the statement *each* prevent *both* of the extremes—permanence and stopping. He would explain this as follows: the literal sense of the statement's first part, "It cannot exist truly," serves to prevent the extreme of thinking things are permanent. The implication of saying that something cannot exist "truly" though is to say that, more generally, it is not non-existent; this then disallows the extreme of thinking that things have stopped. And this description, he would say, was enough for us to figure out for ourselves the process for the second part of the statement: "...because it is interdependent."

DES NA DPAL LDAN ZLA BAS KYANG , DE PHYIR RTEN 'BYUNG RIGS PA
'DI YIS NI, , LTA NGAN DRA BA MTHA' DAG GCOD PAR BYED, , CES
GSUNGS PA RED,

With this understanding we can see why the glorious Chandrakirti stated:

Therefore this proof employing interdependence
Cuts the net of every mistaken view.

DE LTAR CHOS THAMS CAD BDEN PAR MED PA DANG RTEN 'BREL YIN
PA'I RTAGS KYIS MTHA' GNYIS KA SEL BAS NA, RTZA SHE LAS, GANG LA
STONG PA NYID RUNG BA, , DE LA THAMS CAD RUNG BAR 'GYUR, , CES
DANG ,

So we've shown that no object in the universe exists truly; we've given "because it's interdependent" as our reason for saying so; and we've demonstrated that these two facts can prevent one from falling into either extreme. This too is why we see statements like the following, from *Root Wisdom*:

Everything is right for any thing
For which the state of emptiness is right.

Or the well-known sutra lines:

Form is emptiness,
Emptiness form.

MDO LAS KYANG , GZUGS STONG PA'O, , STONG PA NYID GZUGS SO, ,
ZHES SOGS GSUNGS, 'DI YANG RTEN 'BYUNG STONG PA DANG , STONG
PA RTEN 'BYUNG GI DON DU GSUNGS PA YIN, DE BZHIN DU NGA
STONG PA'O, , STONG PA NYID NGA'O, , ZHES SBYAR NA GO BDE BAR

These last lines by the way are stated to show that interdependence is itself empty, and emptiness itself interdependent. It helps your understanding of this point if you take the same pattern and read it as

I am emptiness,
Emptiness me.

'DUG,MDOR BSDU NA, RANG BZHIN GYIS STONG PA LA RGYU 'BRAS
THAMS CAD 'THAD, MTHA' GNYIS LA MA LHUNG BA ZHIG BYUNG NA
LTA BA'I GOL SA GZHAN MI 'BYUNG GSUNGS,

In short, concluded our Lama, the laws of cause and effect are all totally proper for any entity which is empty of any natural existence. If you can just keep yourself from falling into the two extremes, you will make no great other blunders in your effort to develop correct view.

Selection from *Commentary on the Three Principal Paths* by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-1941), ff. 23B-28B.

GNYIS PA SEMS DE BSKYED PA'I TSUL NI,
 ,SHUGS DRAG CHU BO BZHI YI RGYUN GYIS KHYER,
 ,BZLOG DKA' LAS KYI 'CHING BA DAM POS BSDAMS,
 ,BDAG 'DZIN LCAGS KYI DRA BA'I SPUBS SU TSUD,
 ,MA RIG MUN PA'I SMAG CHEN KUN NAS 'THIBS,

 ,MU MED SRID PAR SKYE ZHING SKYE BA RU,
 ,SDUG BSNGAL GSUM GYIS RGYUN CHAD MED PAR MNAR,
 ,GNAS SKABS 'DI 'DRAR GYUR PA'I MA RNAMS KYI,
 ,NGANG TSUL BSAMS NAS SEMS MCHOOG BSKYED BAR MDZOD,
 ,CES PAS BSTAN,

The second section in our explanation of the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being describes how to develop this wish. As the next two verses say,

(7,8)

**They're swept along on four fierce river currents,
Chained up tight in past deeds, hard to undo,
Stuffed in a steel cage of grasping "self,"
Smothered in the pitch-black ignorance.**

**In a limitless round they're born, and in their births
Are tortured by three sufferings without a break;
Think how your mothers feel, think of what's happening
To them: try to develop this highest wish.**

DE YANG SPYOD 'JUG LAS,
 ,SEMS CAN RNAMS KYI KLAD NAD TZAM,
 ,BSAL LO SNYAM DU BSAM NA YANG ,
 ,PHAN 'DOGS BSAM PA DANG LDAN PAS,
 ,BSOD NAMS DPAG MED LDAN GYUR NA,

 ,SEMS CAN RE RE'I MI BDE BA,
 ,DPAG TU MED PA BSAL 'DOD CING ,
 ,RE RE'ANG YON TAN DPAG MED DU,

,BSGRUB PAR 'DOD PA SMOS CI DGOS,
,ZHES DANG ,

We may begin with another pair of verses, from *The Bodhisattva's Life*:

Even just wishing you could stop
A headache another person has
Can bring you merit without measure
Because of the helpful intent you feel.

What need then to mention the wish
That you could stop the immeasurable pain
Of every being, and put every one
In a state of measureless happiness?

DPA' BYIN GYIS ZHUS PA'I MDO LAS,
,BYANG CHUB SEMS KYI BSOD NAMS GANG ,
,DE LA GAL TE GZUGS MCHIS NA,
,NAM MKHA'I KHAM NI KUN GANG STE,
,DE NI DE BAS LHAG PAR 'GYUR,

The *Sutra that Viradatta Requested* says as well,

Were the merit of the wish for enlightenment
To take on some kind of physical form
It would fill the reaches of space itself
And then spill over farther still.

,ZHES SOGS BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS BSKYED PA'I PHAN YON MTHA' YAS
PAR GSUNGS PA LTAR MA SEMS CAN RNAMS SDUG BSNGAL SHUGS
DRAG PA 'DOD PA'I CHU BO, LTA BA'I CHU BO, SRID PA'I CHU BO, MA
RIG PA'I CHU BO STE RGYU DUS KYI CHU BO BZHI DANG , SKYE BA, RGA
BA, NA BA, 'CHI BA STE 'BRAS DUS KYI CHU BO BZHI'I RGYUN GYI
PHYOGS SU KHYER ZHING ,

The benefits of this wish to achieve enlightenment for all living beings are thus described, in these and other texts, as limitless. And so here are the mass of living beings, all of them our mothers, **swept along** the flow of **four river currents**, all fierce suffering. From one viewpoint, while they are acting as causes, these four are the torrent of desire, the torrent of views, the torrent of the ripe force of

deeds, and the torrent of ignorance. Later, when they serve as results, they are the four torrents of birth, and aging, and illness, and death.

CHU BO'I RGYUN DE'I NANG DU KHYER YANG RKANG LAG RNAMS
THAG PAS BSDAMS PA LTAR BZLOG DKA' BA LAS KYI ZHAGS PA'AM
'CHING BAS DAM POR BSDAMS,

And these mother beings are not just hurtling along in these four great rivers; it's just as if their hands and feet too were bound fast—they are **chained up tight**, they are snared, in their own past deeds, hard to undo.

DES KYANG MI TSAD PA SDOM BYED KYI THAG PA DE 'BRENG PA DANG
RTZID THAG LTA BU MA YIN PAR GCOD DKA' BA'AM THAR DKA' BA
LCAGS THAG GIS BSDAMS PA LTA BU'I BDAG 'DZIN LCAGS KYI DRA BA'I
SBUBS SU TSUD,

But that's not all; the bonds which hold them tight are no regular ties, like our twined ropes of yak-skin or hair. It's more like our mothers are clasped in fetters of iron, ever so hard to sever, ever so hard to unshackle—for while they are swept along they are **stuffed in a steel cage of grasping** to some non-existent "self."

DER MA ZAD NYIN MO YIN NA GZHAN LA 'BOD PA DANG ROGS SBREL
BA TSUN CHAD KYI RE BA ZHIG BYA RGYU YOD KYANG , DE LTAR MIN
PAR MTSAN MO NAM GUNG MUN PA'I SMAG RUM NAS CHU BO'I
GZHUNG DU KHYER BA LTA BU'I MA RIG PA'I MUN PA'I SMAG CHEN
GYIS KUN NAS GTIBS SHING ,

And there's more. If there were some daylight, these mother beings would have some glimmer of hope—they could at least cry out, and try to get some help. But it is night, and the darkest hour of the night, and in pitch-black dark they are swept downstream the mighty river: they are **smothered** completely **in pitch-black ignorance**.

MTHA' MED MU MED KYI SRID PA'I RGYA MTSOR SKYE ZHING SKYE BA
LA SDUG BSNGAL GYI SDUG BSNGAL, 'GYUR BA'I SDUG BSNGAL, KHYAB
PA 'DU BYED KYI SDUG BSNGAL GSUM GYIS RGYUN CHAD MED PAR
DUS RTAG TU MNAR NAS SDUG BSNGAL BZOD PAR DKA' BA'I GNAS
SKABS 'DI 'DRAR GYUR KYANG ,

In a **limitless round**, in an endless round, **they are born** into the ocean of life, **and in these births** they **are tortured by three** different kinds of **suffering**: the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and the all-pervading suffering. And their torture comes to them **without a break**—it is always there.

MA RANG GI NGOS NAS NI BYA THABS MED LA, DE LAS 'DON PA'I KHUR
BU RANG LA BABS SHING , 'DON PA'I THABS DA LTA RANG LA BSGRUB
TU YOD PAS NA, MA RNAMS SDUG BSNAL GYIS MNAR BA'I NGANG
TSUL BSAMS NAS DE LAS SGROL BA'I KHUR 'KHYER BA'I LHAG BSAM
SOGS LA RIM GYIS BLO SBYANGS TE BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS RIN PO CHE
SKYE BA'I THABS LA 'BAD DGOS,

This is **what's happening to them**, to our mother beings, this is their situation: unbearable pain. There's nothing they can do like this to help themselves; the son though has a chance at hand to pull his mother free. He must find a way, and find it now, to grasp her hand and draw her out. And the way he must **try** is to **develop this jewel wish** for enlightenment: he must do so first by **thinking how** his **mothers feel**, tortured by pain; then by deciding to take personal responsibility, the duty of freeing them, upon himself; and so on, all in the proper stages.

DE SKYE BA LA BSAM DGOS, BSAM PA LA THOS DGOS PA YIN, SEMS CAN
THAMS CAD BDE BA DANG LDAN 'DOD LHAND LHAND YOD PA BYAMS
PA DANG , SDUG BSNAL DANG BRAL 'DOD LHAND LHAND YOD PA
SNYING RJE, DE YANG SHIN TU GCES PA'I BU GCIG PU NAD KYIS ZIN PA'I
MA DES SPYOD LAM THAMS CAD DU BU DE NAD LAS MYUR DU GROL
THABS SHIG BYUNG NA CI MA RUNG SNYAM PA RGYUN CHAD MED
PAR NGAM NGAM SHUGS KYIS BLO LA LHAND LHAND YOD PA LTA BU
NI SNYING RJE CHEN PO SKYES PA'I TSAD YIN,

To actually gain the wish for enlightenment he must first contemplate it. To contemplate it, he must first learn about it from another. "Loving-kindness" is an almost obsessive desire that each and every living being find happiness. "Compassion" is an almost obsessive desire that they be free of any pain. Think of how a mother feels when her one and only and most beloved son is in the throes of a serious illness. Wherever she goes, whatever she does, she is always thinking how wonderful it would be if she could find some way of freeing him quickly from his sickness. These thoughts come to her mind in a steady stream, without a break, and all of their own, automatically. They become an obsession with her. When we feel this way towards every living being, and only then, we

can say we have gained what they call "great compassion."

SANGS RGYAS KYI BSTAN PA 'DI LA BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS RIN PO CHE
LA BLO SBYONG TSUL RGYU 'BRAS MAN NGAG BDUN DANG , BDAG
GZHAN MNYAM BRJE GNYIS YOD, DE GNYIS GANG GI SGO NAS BLO
SBYANG NA'ANG BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS NGES PAR SKYE, DE SBYONG
BA'I THABS TSANG LA MA NOR BA, SA STENG 'DI NA 'GRAN ZLA DANG
BRAL BA NI 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO'I BSTAN PA'I SNYING
PO BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI YIN PAS 'DI'I SGO NAS BYANG
CHUB KYI SEMS LA BLO SBYANG DGOS,

Here in the teachings of the Buddha there are two methods given for training one's mind in this precious jewel, the wish for enlightenment. The first is known as the "seven-part, cause-and-effect instruction." The second we call "exchanging self and others." No matter which of the two you use to train your mind, you can definitely gain the wish for enlightenment. The way to train oneself in the wish, the way which is complete and which never errs, the way unmatched by any other here upon this earth, is the instruction of the Steps of the path to Buddhahood, the very essence of all the teachings of our gentle protector, the great Tsongkapa. Thus you should train your mind in the wish for enlightenment by using this very instruction.

BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SBYONG TSUL MDOR BSDUS NA, THOG MAR
BTANG SNYOMS DANG, DE NAS MAR SHES SOGS NAS RIM GYIS BSGOM,
MAR SHES, DRIN DRAN, DRIN GZO GSUM NI YID 'ONG GI BYAMS PA'I
RGYU DANG , YID 'ONG GI BYAMS PA NI DE GSUM GYI 'BRAS BU DANG ,
SNYING RJE CHEN PO'I RGYU YIN,

Here we'll give just a brief summary of how one trains himself in the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being. The start-off is to practice feelings of neutrality towards all beings; after that, one begins meditation on each of the steps from "mother recognition" on up. The first three steps are to recognize all beings as one's mothers, to feel gratitude for their kindness, and to wish to repay that kindness. These three act as a cause for what we call "beautiful" loving-kindness. This type of loving-kindness is itself the fourth step; it is both an effect brought about by the first three, and a cause for the fifth: great compassion.

BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SHUGS DRAG YOD MED KYANG SNYING RJE
CHEN PO SHUGS CHE CHUNG GIS 'BYUNG BA YIN, SNYING RJE MA
SKYES NA SKYE BA'I THABS BLA MA SPYAN RAS GZIGS KYI RNAL 'BYOR

BSGOM, GSOL BA 'DEBS, SPYAN RAS GZIGS KYI THUGS DANG RANG
SEMS DBYER MED DU BSRE BA'I RNAL 'BYOR LA 'BAD NA BYIN RLABS
ZHUGS TE SNYING RJE CHEN PO SKYE BA LA KHYAD CHE BA MAN
NGAG YIN, ZAB GNAD GZHAN 'GA' RE YOD KYANG TSOGS SU MI 'CHAD
GSUNGS,

The relative intensity of one's wish for enlightenment depends on the intensity of one's feeling of great compassion. If you find it difficult to develop compassion, you can practice the meditation known as "Lama Loving-Gaze" to help you gain it. If you make good efforts to perform this meditation and the proper supplications, as well as the practice where you visualize that your mind and that of Loving-Gaze are mixed inseparably, then you can gain a blessing for it. This is a very special personal instruction for developing great compassion. There were, our Lama explained, a number of other profound points in this regard—but he would not detail them in a public gathering.

SNYING RJE CHEN PO SKYES PA NA GZHAN DON KHUR DU 'KHYER BA'I
LHAG BSAM SKYE, DE LAS BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SKYE BA YIN,

Once you develop great compassion, then you can develop the extraordinary form of personal responsibility, where you take upon yourself the load of working for others' benefit. And the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being comes from this.

DE YANG BTANG SNYOMS SGOM PA LA THOG MAR DGRA GNYEN
GANG YANG MA YIN PA'I BAR MA'I SEMS CAN ZHIG LA CHAGS SDANG
GI SEMS SNYOMS, DE NAS RANG GI YID LA 'BAB PA'I GNYEN ZHIG
DANG, YID DU MI 'ONG BA'I DGRA GNYIS MDUN DU BSAM STE, GNYEN
'DIS KYANG TSE RABS MANG POR DGRAR SKYES TE GNOD PA BYAS,
DGRA 'DIS KYANG TSE RABS MANG POR GNYEN DU GYUR NAS PHAN
BTAGS TSUL BSAM STE CHAGS SDANG GI SEMS SNYOMS,

The meditation on neutrality goes like this. First you put your thoughts in an even state, free of feelings of like and dislike, by thinking about someone who is for you a neutral figure: neither your enemy nor your friend. Then you imagine that two people are sitting before you: one of your best-loved friends, and one of your ugliest enemies. Next you think very carefully about how the friend has, in many of your previous lives, taken birth as your enemy and hurt you. You think too about how the enemy has, in so many of your past lives, taken birth as your friend and helped you. This puts your mind in the even state, free of feelings of

like and dislike.

DE NAS SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYANG RANG RANG GI NGOS NAS BDE
BA 'DOD PA'ANG MNYAM, SDUG BSNGAL MI 'DOD PA'ANG MNYAM, DE
THABS CAD RANG GI DGRA GNYEN GNYIS KA LAN GRANGS MANG PO
BYAS PA'ANG MNYAM NA, SU LA NI CHAGS PAR BYA, SU LA NI SDANG
BAR BYA SNYAM DU MKHA' KHYAB KYI SEMS CAN THAMS CAD LA
SEMS SNYOMS PA MA SKYES KYI BAR DU BSAM DGOS,

You go on then to think about how all living beings are equal in that, from his own point of view, each one of them wants to be happy. They are equal too in not wanting pain. And they are equal in that every one has acted as both my enemy and my friend, many many times. So who am I supposed to like? And who am I supposed to dislike? You have to keep on practicing this way until, one day, you gain neutral feelings towards all sentient beings, as vast in extent as space itself.

MAR SHES SGOM PA LA RNAM 'GREL LAS GSUNGS PA'I RIG PA'I YA
MTHA' THUG MED DU SGRUB PA'I RIGS PA 'DI SBYAR NA MAR SHES
SKYE BA LA PHAN CHE BAS 'DIR MDOR BSDU NA,

The next step is the meditation where you recognize that every living being is your mother. Gaining this recognition is much easier if you apply the line of reasoning mentioned in the *Commentary on Valid Perception* for demonstrating the infinite regression of one's awareness. We'll present this reasoning here, in brief.

RANG GI DE RING GI RIG PA 'DI KHA SANG GI RIG PA'I RIG RGYUN
DANG , DA LO'I RIG PA 'DI LO SNGA MA'I RIG PA'I RIG RGYUN YIN PA
BZHIN DU, RANG GI TSE 'DI'I RIG PA 'DI TSE SNGA MA'I RIG PA'I RIG
RGYUN DANG , TSE SNGA MA'I RIG PA DE YANG DE'I TSE SNGA MA
SNGA MA'I RIG RGYUN YIN PAS DE GA NANG BZHIN PHAR DED NA 'DI
PHAN CHAD DU MED BYA BA GTAN NAS MED PAR RIG PA'I YA MTHA'
THUG MED DU 'GRUB CING ,

Your awareness of today is a mental continuation of the awareness you had yesterday. This year's awareness is a mental continuation of the awareness you had the year before. Just so, your awareness over this entire life is a mental continuation of the awareness you had in your former life. The awareness you had in your former life was, in turn, a mental continuation of the awareness you had in the life before that. You can continue back in a regression like this and

absolutely never reach some point where you can say, "Prior to this, I had no awareness." This then proves the infinite regression of one's awareness.

DE BZHIN DU RANG GI 'KHOR BA LA THOG MA'I MTHA' MED PAS SKYE
BA LA YA MTHA' MED, SA PHYOGS 'DIR MA SKYES BYA BA MED, SA
PHYOGS RE RE LA'ANG GRANGS MED PA RE SKYES, SEMS CAN 'DI LTA
BU'I LUS MA BLANGS BYA BA MED, BLANGS PA RE RE'ANG GRANGS
MED PA RE BLANGS, KHYI GCIG BU'I SKYE BA BLANGS PA'ANG GRANGS
KYIS MI CHOD, SEMS CAN THAMS CAD LA DE LTAR YIN,

My own circle of life then must also be beginningless, and the births I have taken as well can have no starting point. There exists no place where I have never taken birth. I have taken birth in every single place, countless times. There exists no creature whose body I have not worn. I have worn every kind of body, countless times. Just the lives I have taken as a dog are themselves beyond any number to count. And the same is true for every living being.

DES NA SEMS CAN 'DIS RANG GI MA MA BYAS BYA BA GCIG KYANG
MED, SEMS CAN RE RES KYANG RANG GI MA GRANGS MED PA RE BYAS
PA SHA STAG YIN, MI GCIG PU'I RTEN LA RANG GI MA BYAS PA'ANG
GRANGS KYIS MI CHOD PAS,

Therefore there exists no being who has never been my mother. Absolutely every single one of them has been my mother a countless number of times. Even the number of times that each has been my mother in just my births as a human is past all counting too.

DE LTAR SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYIS RANG GI MA GRANGS MED PA RE
YANG DANG YANG DU BYAS TSUL LA NGES SHES SHUGS DRAG MA
SKYES BAR YANG NAS YANG DU BSGOM,

Do this meditation over and over until you gain a deep-felt certainty that each and every living being has been your mother, over and over, countless times.

DE NAS DRIN DRAN TSUL LA, RANG GI TSE 'DI'I MA LA MTSON NA,
RANG AA MA'I MNGAL DU CHAGS PA NAS BZUNG STE BU LA GNOD
KYIS DOGS NAS ZAS SPYOD KHA 'DZEM PA TSUN CHAD NAD PA NANG
BZHIN GYI DKA' SPYAD LHUR BLANGS, MA RANG GI GZUGS PO NAD PA
NYAM THAG PA'I LUS LTAR GOM PA CHE BA ZHIG KYANG 'DOR MA
PHOD PAR ZLA BA DGU DANG ZHAG BCU'I RING RANG AA MA'I

MNGAL DU NYAR,

Developing a sense of gratitude is the next step, and you can start by taking your mother in this present life. She began her hardships for me while I was still in her womb, gladly taking it upon herself to avoid anything she felt might hurt me—even down to the food she ate—treating herself with care, as though she were sick. For nine months and ten days she carried me in her womb, looking at her own body as though it belonged to someone else, someone very ill, and hesitating even to take big steps.

PHYIR SKYES PA'I TSE'ANG MA RANG LA NA TSA DANG SDUG BSNGAL
TSAD MED PAS GNOD TSABS CHEN PO DE TZAM BYUNG YANG , DA
DUNG YID BZHIN GYI NOR BU RIN PO CHE RNYED PA LTAR DGA' TSOR
CHEN PO BYAS,

As she gave me birth, my mother was torn with violent suffering, excruciating pain, and yet still felt an overwhelming joy, as though she had discovered some precious gem that would grant her any wish.

RANG DE DUS NGU RGYU DANG LAG PAS G-YAB TZAM G-YAB TZAM
BYED PA LAS GZHAN GANG YANG MI SHES, CI YANG MI NUS PA'I,
LKUGS PA, ZHA BO, BYTU PHRUG KHA DMAR LTA BU ZHIG LAS MED PA
LA AA MAS SOR MO BCUI RTZE LA G-YENG, SHA'I DROD LA SBYAR,
BRTZE BA'I 'DZUM GYIS BSUS,

Right then I knew absolutely nothing more than to cry and wave my arms around somehow. I was totally helpless. Totally stupid. Incapacitated. Nothing more than some baby chick with a red-rubber beak still yet to harden. But she swayed me on her fingertips, and pressed me to her body's warmth, and greeted me with a smile of love.

DGA' BA'I MIG GIS BLTAS, SNABS KHAS PHYIS, MI GTZANG BA LAG PAS
PHYIS, 'O MA'I SKYO MA SOGS KHAS BLUD, GNOD PA GANG NUS LAS
BSRUNG , PHAN PA GANG NUS BSGRUB,

With joyful eyes she gazed on me, and wiped the snot from my face with her lips, and cleaned my filthy shit with her hands. Sometimes she chewed my food for me, and fed me things like milky porridge straight from her mouth to mine. She did her best to protect me from any hurt. She did her best to get me any good.

DE DAG GI SKABS SU RANG GI SKYID SDUG LEGS NYES TSANG MA
THAMS CAD MA DE'I GDONG LA BLTAS TE MA DE GCIG PU LA RE BA
BYAS NAS SDOD DGOS PA BYUNG , RANG DE DUS AA MAS DRIN GYIS
MA BSKYANGS NA CHU TSOD GCIG KYANG MI SDOD DE, BYA DANG
KHYI SOGS KYIS ZA 'GRO BA SOGS LAS, GSON POR YONG RGYU'I RE BA
MED, RANG AA MAS NYIN RE LA YANG SROG MGO BRGYA BRGYA
TZAM BTON PA'I DRIN YOD,

In those days I had to look to her for everything; good or bad, happy or sad, all the hope I could have lay in one person: mother. But for her kindness, I wouldn't have lasted an hour; they could have set me out in the open right then and some birds or a dog would have come and made a meal of me—I'd have no hope of coming out alive. Every single day she protected me from harms that could have taken my life, no less than a hundred times. Such was her kindness.

RANG NAR SON NAS KYANG MA RANG GIS SDIG SDUG GTAM NGAN LA
MA 'DZEMS PAR BSAGS BSAGS NAS MA RANG GIS KYANG LONGS SPYAD
MA BRA BA'I RGYU NOR GANG YOD BU'I LAG TU

And while I was growing up she gathered together whatever I needed, avoiding no bad deed, and no suffering, and caring nothing for what other people might say of her. All the money and things she had she handed over to me, hesitating to use anything for herself.

BZHAGRNG LA CHOS BYED PA'I SKAL BA YOD NA MA RANG GIS NOR
RDZAS LA PHANGS PA MED PAR MTHUN RKYEN SBYAR TE CHOS SGOR
GZHUGS PA MAN CHAD 'KHOS KA GANG YOD PAS DRIN GYIS
BSKYANGS PA LA TSAD MED,

For those of us who are fortunate enough to be practicing the monastic life, it was mother who put forth all the necessary expenses, giving without reservation, to arrange our admission into the monastery. And from that time on she supported us here, from whatever resources she had. Thus the kindness she has shown us is truly without measure.

TSE 'DI'I MAS DRIN GYIS BSKYANGS PA YANG TSE 'DI GCIG PU MA YIN
PAR, RANG GI TSE RABS SNGA MA MANG POR DRIN CHEN POS YANG
NAS YANG DU GRANGS MED PAR BSKYANGS, TSE 'DI'I MA 'DI TZAM MA
ZAD SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYANG DA LTA SKYE 'CHI 'PHOS PA'I

DBANG GIS NGO MA SHES PA MA GTOGS TSE RABS SNGA MA RNAMS SU
RANG GI MA BYAS PA'I SKABS TSE 'DI'I MAS JI LTAR DRIN GYIS
BSKYANGS PA LTAR DRIN CHEN PO'I SGO NAS BSKYANGS PA SHA STAG
YIN TE,

And this is not the only life in which my present mother has given this kindness to me. She has showered me with this kindness, great kindness, over and over, countless times, in my many lives before. And she is not the only one; every single living being has been my mother in my past lives, and during those lives cared for me no less than my present mother does—it is only my transitions from death to birth that prevent me from recognizing all these mothers now.

DPER NA DA LTA'I DUD 'GRO KHYI LA SOGS PA DANG , BYA BYI'U TSOS
RANG RANG GI BU LA SNYING BRTZE LUGS DANG , DRIN GYIS JI LTAR
BSKYANG LUGS LA BLTAS KYANG SHES PAR NUS GSUNGS,

Look now, concluded our Lama, at the way any common animal—a dog or bird, even the tiny sparrow—shows affection for its young, and cares for it well. From watching this we can imagine what kindness we were given too.

DRIN GZO BA NI, DE LTAR RANG LA THOG MA MED PA'I DUS NAS YANG
YANG DRIN GYIS BSKYANGS PA'I MA SEMS CAN RNAMS GONG DU
BSHAD PA'I CHU BO BZHI'I RGYUN GYIS 'KHOR BA'I RGYA MTSO CHEN
PO'I KLONG DU KHYER NAS SDUG BSNAL GSUM LA SOGS PAS RGYUN
CHAD MED PAR MNAR TE SHIN TU NYAM THAG PA LA,

The next step in gaining the wish for enlightenment is to develop a wish to repay this great kindness. So every living being is my mother, and has given me her loving care over and over endlessly, for time with no beginning. And we know from what was described above that they are being swept along by four great currents, out to sea—to the vast expanse of the ocean of cyclic life. They are tormented, without a break, by the three types of suffering, and all the other pains. Their situation is desperate.

DA LTA, BU RANG LA DE DAG 'KHOR BA'I RGYA MTSO LAS THAR BA'I
THABS BYA RGYU YOD BZHIN DU CI YANG MI SEMS PAR BSDAD NA
SHIN TU MA RABS KHREL MED THA CHAD YIN PAS NA,

And here am I, their child. Right now I have a chance to rescue them from this ocean of cyclic life. Suppose I simply sit and bide my time, and give no thought

to them. This is the lowest a person could stoop—base and absolutely shameless.

DA NI SEMS CAN RANG RANG GI NGOS NAS ZAS GOS GNAS MAL RNYED
PA SOGS GNAS SKABS KYI 'KHOR BA'I BDE BA DE TZAM MA YIN PAR
MTHAR THUG GI BDE BA LA BKOD NA DRIN GZO'I MCHOOG TU 'GYUR
BAS, DES NA SEMS CAN THAMS CAD BDE BA THAMS CAD DANG LDAN
PA DANG , SDUG BSNGAL THAMS CAD DANG BRAL BA ZHIG BYA DGOS
PAR 'DUG SNYAM DU BSAM,

Right now I could give them things that they would be happy to get—food, or clothes, or beds to sleep on, whatever. But these are only some temporary happiness within the circle of life. The very highest way of repaying their kindness would be to put them into the state of ultimate happiness. So let me decide within myself that every living being must come to have every happiness. And every one should be freed as well from every form of pain.

DE YANG SEMS CAN 'DI DAG LA ZAG MED KYI BDE BA TA GA LA YOD
DE, ZAG BCAS KYI BDE BA TZAM YANG MI 'DUG, SEMS CAN KHO RANG
TSOS BDE BA YIN SNYAM PA 'DI RNAMS KYANG NGO BO 'GYUR BA'I
SDUG BSNGAL SHA STAG YIN, 'DOD RGYU BDE BA 'DOD KYANG BDE BA'I
RGYUR DGE BA SGRUB MI SHES, MI 'DOD RGYU SDUG BSNGAL MI 'DOD
KYANG , SDUG BSNGAL GYI RGYU SDIG PA SPONG MI SHES, BLANG DOR
GO LOG TU SPYAD DE SDUG BSNGAL GYIS NYAM THAG PA'I MA RGAN
SEMS CAN 'DI DAG THAMS CAD BDE BA DANG BDE BA'I RGYU THAMS
CAD DANG LDAN NA CI MA RUNG , LDAN PAR GYUR CIG, LDAN PA
ZHIG NGA RANG GIS BYED, SEMS CAN THAMS CAD SDUG BSNGAL
DANG SDUG BSNGAL GYI RGYU THAMS CAD DANG BRAL NA CI MA
RUNG , BRAL BAR GYUR CIG, BRAL BA ZHIG NGA RANG GIS BYED
SNYAM DU YANG YANG BSGOMS PAS BYAMS PA DANG SNYING RJE
SHUGS CAN BSKYED,

Right now it's absurd to say that these beings have any kind of pure happiness—they don't even have any of the impure kinds. Every single thing they think is happiness is, in its essence, nothing more than pain. They want wantables but don't want to know about doing the good deeds that bring happiness. They want no unwantables but don't want to know about giving up the bad deeds that bring pain. They act ass backwards: they do what they shouldn't and don't what they should. And so my dear aged mothers, these living beings, are made to suffer.

"How good it would be if they could all find every happiness, and every cause of happiness.

I wish they could. I'll see that they do."

"How good it would be if they could all be free of every pain, and every cause of pain.

I wish they could. I'll see that they do."

Let these two trains of thought run through your mind; meditate on them over and over again. Then you will come to feel the very strongest loving-kindness and compassion.

YANG KHA CIG LA, SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYI KHUR RANG GIS BYED
MI DGOS TE, SEMS CAN 'DREN MKHAN SANGS RGYAS BYANG SEMS
MANG PO YOD SNYAM PA LTA BU 'BYUNG SRID KYANG DE NI SHIN TU
MA RABS KHREL MED THA CHAD YIN PAS DE 'DRA BSAM PA GTAN NAS
MI RUNG STE, DPER NA TSE 'DI'I RANG GI MA'I BKRES SKOM SOGS KYI
SDUG BSNGAL SEL BA'I THABS BU GZHAN GYIS BYAS NA YANG , RANG
LA DRIN GYIS BSKYANGS PA'I DRIN LAN GZO BA'I KHUR DE RANG NYID
LA BAB PA BZHIN DU,

Some people might come up with the idea that "Why should I take upon myself this great load, of every living being? There are plenty of Buddhas and bodhisattvas around to guide them on their way." This kind of thought though is absolutely improper. It's base. It's shameless. It's as if your mother in this life was hungry, and parched, and you expected someone else's child to go and give her food and drink. But it's you for whom she has cared, and the responsibility of paying her back has fallen only to you.

RANG LA SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYIS THOG MA MED PA NAS MA LAN
GRANGS MANG PO BYAS SHING , DE DAG GI SKABS THAMS CAD DU TSE
'DI'I MA LTAR DRIN CHEN PO'I SGO NAS BSKYANGS PA SHA STAG YIN
PAS, DE'I DRIN LAN GZO BA NI SANGS RGYAS BYANG SEMS GZHAN SU
LA'ANG KHAG MI 'KHRI BAR RANG GCIG PU'I KHUR DU BABS PAS NA,

It's the same with all these living beings, who for beginningless time have served as my mother so many times, and who in each of these times cared for me in every way with the kindness of this present mother. Returning their kindness is

no business of anyone else at all, not for some Buddha or bodhisattva—it is my responsibility, and only mine.

SEMS CAN BDE BA DANG LDAN PA DANG SDUG BSNGAL DANG BRAL
BAR BYED MKHAN DE'ANG GZHAN LA RAG MA LAS PAR SEMS CAN
THAMS CAD BDE BA THAMS CAD DANG LDAN PA YANG NGA RANG
GCIG BUS BYED, SDUG BSNGAL THAMS CAD DANG BRAL BA YANG NGA
RANG GCIG PUS BYED, BLA MA SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG LA'ANG
NGA RANG GCIG PUS BKOD SNYAM PA'I LHAG PA'I BSAM PA SHUGS
DRAG TU BSGOM,

So someone is going to do it—to make sure every sentient being has every happiness, and never a single pain. It is going to be myself; I'll rely on no one else. I by myself will see to it that every single being comes to have every single happiness. And I by myself will see to it that every single being gets free of every single pain. I will by myself put them into the state of the Lama, the state of Buddhahood. Meditate strongly on these thoughts; they are the step we call the "extraordinary form of personal responsibility."

DE LTA BU'I SEMS BSKYED NA'ANG DA LTA NI RANG LA SEMS CAN
THAMS CAD LTA ZHOG, SEMS CAN GCIG TZAM 'DREN PA'I NUS PA
YANG MI 'DUG, 'O NA DE LTA BU'I NUS PA DE SU LA YOD CE NA, DE NI
YANG DAG PAR RDZOGS PA'I SANGS RGYAS NYAG GCIG LA YOD PA MA
GTOGS GZHAN SU LA'ANG MED, RANG GIS KYANG SANGS RGYAS KYI
GO 'PHANG DE THOB NA DON GNYIS MTHAR PHYIN TE SKU GSUNG
THUGS KYI 'OD ZER RE RES KYANG SEMS CAN GRANGS MED PA'I DON
BYA BAR NUS PAS,

I may be able to develop this noble intention, but the fact is that I'm completely incapable of leading a single being to Buddhahood—much less every one of them. Who then has the capacity? This power is had by a fully enlightened Buddha—only by him, and by no one else at all. If I can reach the same state, I will by definition have brought both mine and others' benefit to its perfection. And then every single ray of light that emanates from me, whether it be an action of my body, or my speech, or my thoughts, will have the power to accomplish the ends of countless sentient beings.

DES NA SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYI DON DU SANGS RGYAS KYI GO
'PHANG DE NYID DUS MYUR BA NYID DU THOB PA ZHIG CI NAS KYANG
BYA SNYAM DU BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS BCOS MA MA YIN PA BSKYED,

And so, for the sake of every living being, I will do anything I can to achieve this one great goal—the state of a Buddha—with every speed. Think this way to yourself, and do anything you can to develop the genuine wish to reach enlightenment for every living being.

BYANG SEMS SBYANG SKABS SANGS RGYAS THOB NA DE'I ZHOR DU
RANG DON YANG 'BAD MED DU 'BYUNG BAR BSAM NA THEG DMAN DU
MI LHUNG BA'I GNAD YOD PAR RJE'I LAM RIM DU GSUNGS YOD GSUNG
,

While you practice these meditations to develop the wish for enlightenment, you can also reflect that—when you achieve Buddhahood—you will by the way automatically gain everything you need for yourself as well. Our Lama mentioned that this point was stated in Lord Tsongkapa's exposition on the Steps of the path as being very helpful in preventing a person from slipping to the lesser way.

RGYU 'BRAS MAN NGAG BDUN GYI DANG PO GSUM NI SNYING RJE
CHEN PO'I GZHI SGRUB PA YIN, YID 'ONG GI BYAMS PA NI DE GSUM GYI
'BRAS BUR 'ONG BAS DMIGS PA LOGS SU SKYONG TSUL MED KYANG ,
DE'I TSAB TU SEMS CAN THAMS CAD BDE BA DANG LDAN 'DOD KYI
BYAMS PA BSGOM DGOS,

The first three of the seven parts in this cause-and-effect instruction provide a foundation for great compassion. The "beautiful" form of loving-kindness comes out as a result of these three, so there is no separate meditation instruction for it. One must though in its place meditate upon the loving-kindness where you wish that every being gain every happiness.

BYAMS PA DE DANG , SNYING RJE, LHAG BSAM GSUM NI GZHAN DON
DON GNYER GYI BLO YIN, SEMS BSKYED DNGOS NI DE DAG GI 'BRAS BU
YIN, LAM RIM YANG SKYES BU CHUNG 'BRING GI LAM NI SEMS SKYE
BA'I SNGON 'GRO DANG , BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SGOM TSUL NI DNGOS
GZHI, MJUG SPYOD PA'I SKOR RNAMS DE'I BSLAB BYA YIN,

This loving-kindness, as well as compassion and the extraordinary type of personal responsibility, are all forms of an attitude of striving for the welfare of others. The actual wish for enlightenment is their result. The works on the Steps of the path themselves have a similar structure. The paths for people of lesser

and medium scopes represent a preliminary to developing the wish for enlightenment. The teaching on how to meditate on this great wish is the main stage. In conclusion then come the sections on bodhisattva deeds—advices in acting out the wish.

BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS SBYONG BA'I SKABS SU SEMS BSKYED NYER
GNYIS DANG , SMON 'JUG SOGS KYI NGO BO KHYAD PAR RNAMS SHES
PAR BYAS TE BLO SBYANG DGOS,

When you're practicing to develop this wish for enlightenment, you should train your mind in its basic nature and all its various attributes: these include the twenty-two forms of the wish, the distinction between praying and actually engaging, and so on.

BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS RIN PO CHE 'DI NI RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB
THAMS CAD KYI SNYING PO DANG , RGYAL SRAS BYANG CHUB SEMS
DPA' THAMS CAD KYI THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL GCIG PU YIN TE, SPYOD
'JUG LAS,

,DAM CHOS 'O MA BSRUBS PA LAS,
,MAR GYI NYING KHU PHYUNG BA YIN,
,ZHES DANG ,
,BSKAL PA DU MAR RAB DGONGS MDZAD PA YI,
,THUB DBANG RNAMS KYIS 'DI NYID PHAN PAR GZIGS,
,ZHES DANG , 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN POS KYANG , , SEMS
BSKYED THEG MCHOOG LAM GYI GZHUNG SHING STE, , ZHES PA NAS, DE
LTAR SHES NAS RGYAL SRAS DPA' BO RNAMS, , RIN CHEN SEMS MCHOOG
THUGS DAM MTHIL DU MDZAD, , CES GSUNGS, RJE THAMS CAD
MKHYEN PAS BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS RIN PO CHE 'DI KHO NA MA
GTOGS GZHAN GANG LA'ANG THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL DU MA GSUNGS
PAS, RANG CAG KYANG THEG PA CHEN PO BA ZHIG BYED 'DOD NA
BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LA NYAMS LEN GYI MTHIL DU BYA DGOS,

This precious jewel, the wish to gain enlightenment for every being, is the inner essence of all the high teachings of the victorious Buddhas. It is the single centermost contemplation of every one of their sons—the bodhisattvas. As *The Bodhisattva's Life* relates,

It's the purest essence of the butter
Churned from the milk of the holy word.

We see too,

Many eons the Able Lords considered,
And found but this to be of benefit.

Our gentle protector, the great Tsongkapa, has as well composed the lines that begin with "Center beam of the highest way, the wish..." and conclude with "...Bodhisattva princes, knowing this, / Keep the high jewel wish their center practice." It was only this precious wish for enlightenment, and nothing else at all, that the all-knowing Lord ever described as the "center practice." Therefore those of us who wish to become followers of the greater way must make the wish for enlightenment our very centermost practice.

DENG SANG THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL GANG LA BYED CES DRIS NA YI
DAM ZHIG LA BYED ZER BA LAS, BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LA BYED ZER
MKHAN PHAR ZHOG, BYANG SEMS 'DI LA THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL DU
BYED DGOS PAR SHES MKHAN YANG DKON PAR

Nowadays when you go up to someone and ask him what his very most important practice is, he'll tell you he's meditating on one of those powerful tutelary deities. You don't meet people who say their chief practice is meditating on the wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being. Much less, for in fact it's quite difficult to find anyone who even realizes that he should make this wish his centermost practice.

'DUGKH SHAS KYIS THUGS DAM GYI MTHIL DE BSANGS DANG , GSER
SKYEMS DANG , KHA MCHU NAG PO ZHI BAR BYED PA'I GZUNGS, NYES
PA KUN SEL, LUG GZUNGS, RTA GZUNGS, NOR GZUNGS, BAR CHAD
LAM SEL, RGYA NAG SKAG BZLOG, MI KHA DGRA BSGYUR SOGS LA
BYED, DE LA BLTOS NA YI DAM GYI LHA TSAD LDAN RE LA THUGS DAM
GYI MTHIL DU BYED ZER BA DE YANG DGA' RAB YIN,

We see people making all different sorts of things their central practice: the Elimination Ritual for getting rid of bad spirits, the Golden Tea offering, the Spell for Ending Evil Litigation, the ritual they call Stopping All Harms, the Sheep Spell, the Horse Spell, the Money Spell, the ritual for No More Problems, the ritual for Stopping Bad Luck at the End of the Twelve-Year Cycle, the ritual for Preventing the Praise that Others Give You from Turning to a Curse, and on and on. These are all so bad that they make it look pretty good when a person can say he's making a central practice out of anything at all associated with some

authentic tutelary deity.

YANG LUNG PA KHA CIG TU, MNA' BSHAGS RIN CHEN PHRENG BA
DANG , SDIG BSHAGS GSER GYI SPU GRI , KHYI MDO, SPYANG MDO, WA
MDO, DRED MDO, SBRUL MDO ZER BA SOGS GANG DRAN DRAN BYAS
PA LTA BU DE 'DRA DAR SROL 'DUG KYANG , DE TSO LA KHUNGS RNAM
DAG YOD PA GTAN NAS MA MTHONG ZHING ,

We also see a number of works gaining some popularity in different localities that seem to be just anything somebody could think up: the String of Jewels for those Bound by Blood, the Blade of Gold for Confessing Sins, the so-called "Dog Sutra," the so-called "Wolf Sutra," the so-called "Fox Sutra," the so-called "Bear Sutra," the so-called "Snake Sutra," and all the rest. We find though absolutely no legitimate origin for any of these works.

GAL TE SDIG BSHAGS SU BTON RGYU ZHIG NGES PAR DGOS NA'ANG
DPE CHA BRDZUN MA, NGAL BA DON MED DE 'DRAS LAG MI THOGS
PAR PHUNG PO GSUM PA'I MDO DANG , SMAN BLA'I MDO, THAR PA
CHEN PO'I MDO, MDO SDE BSKAL BZANG LA SOGS PA RGYAL BAS MDO
RGYUD RNAMS SU MANG DU GSUNGS PA'I TSAD LDAN KHUNGS DAG
DE 'DRA LA KLOG 'DON BYED DGOS GSUNGS,

If you really do need a text to use for confessing your bad deeds, you should stop wasting your time with fake scriptures and meaningless efforts like these. The Victors have, in all their open and secret teachings, given us more than enough appropriate works: the *Three Heaps Sutra*, the *Sublime Medicine Sutra*, the *Sutra of the Great Freedom*, the *Sutra of the Eon of Fortune*, and others of the like. It is texts like these, our Lama told us, authoritative texts with a legitimate origin, that we must use for our study and recitations.

YANG 'GA' SHAS KYI SEMS LA, BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LOS YOD, CHO
GA'I 'GOR SANGS RGYAS CHOS TSOGS MA BTON NAS SEMS CAN THAMS
CAD KYI DON DU SANGS RGYAS THOB PAR SHOG CIG SNYAM PA DE YIN
BSAM YANG DE NI BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LA YID SMON BYAS PA TZAM
DANG , SMON LAM BTAB PA TZAM LAS DNGOS MA YIN TE, DE YIN NA
DGE SBYOR BYED KHUL BYAS PA GZHAN DANG GZHAN LAS KYANG
BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS LAS SLA SHOS SU SNANG BA'I PHYIR RO, , DE
LTAR NA BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS NI GONG DU BSHAD PA LTAR BLO RIM
GYIS SBYANGS TE SKYE DGOS PA YIN GSUNGS,

Now there are also some people around who think to themselves, "But I do have the wish for enlightenment. After all, at the beginning of all my devotions I recite the 'Buddha-Dharma-Sangha' prayer and think about achieving Buddhahood so I could help every living being." This though is just expressing a hope that you gain the wish for enlightenment—it's just making a prayer about the wish. It's not the actual wish itself. If it were, then developing the wish to achieve Buddhahood would have to be the very easiest of all the many practices of virtue we are supposedly trying to do. And so, concluded our Lama, we must rather gain this true wish by putting our minds through the training described above—one by one through each of the steps, in order.