

Immaculate

*The Second Chapter of Je Tsongkapa's
Greatest Classic on Emptiness*



by Je Tsongkapa
translated by Geshe Michael Roach

An Excerpt from “Immaculate”:
Chapter 2 of Je Tsongkapa’s great book on emptiness,
An Illumination of the True Thoughts

Additional Causes of Purity

[,GAL TE DE NI KHRIMS DAG RANG BZHIN LTA,
,DE PHYIR DE NI TSUL KHRIMS DAG MI 'GYUR,
,DE PHYIR DE NI RTAG TU GSUM CHAR LA'ANG,
,GNYIS BLO'I RGYU BA YANG DAG BRAL BAR 'GYUR,]

**[If they were to view
Following an ethical way of life purely
As something that existed by nature,
Then their ethics would no longer be pure.
Thus it is that they are always free
Of their mind running in duality
Towards any of the three.**

II.9-12]

BZHI PA NI, GANG GI PHYIR DGE SLONG KHA CIG SO THAR LAS BRTZAMS
TE, TSUL KHRIMS CHES YONGS SU DAG PA YIN KYANG, GAL TE DE NI CHOS
RNAMS LA RANG [@54b] BZHIN GYIS GRUB PAR LTA BA MI SPONG NA, DE'I
PHYIR RGYU MTSAN DES DGE SLONG DE TSUL KHRIMS DAG PAR MI 'GYUR
TE,

Here finally is the fourth division from above: a presentation of additional causes that make our ethical life totally pure. Now there are certain monks who, with regard to the way in which they observe the vows of individual freedom,¹ possess an ethical way of life which is incredibly pure. And yet if a monk like this has failed to rid themselves of the viewpoint in which they think that objects exist through some nature of their own,

¹ *Vows of individual freedom*: That is, the first of the three traditional sets of vows, known in Sanskrit as *pratimoksha*, which is translated into Tibetan as *sotar gyi dompa*—both meaning “vows of individual freedom.” These are formal commitments by both laypeople and the ordained not to harm others. One idea of their name is that any person who honors these vows will attain freedom (nirvana and enlightenment); whereas anyone who does not will not—and so it’s an “individual” thing. See the wonderful commentary on *vinaya*—vowed morality—by Panchen Lodru Leksang (c. 1510); f. 7a of Volume 1 (%B45, SL00059-1).

then because of this—for this reason—that same monk’s observance of an ethical life is not pure.

TSUL KHRIMS 'CHAL BA TSUL KHRIMS DANG LDAN PA LTAR BCOS PA STE,
DKON MCHO G BRTZEGS PA LAS, 'OD SRUNGS 'DI LA DGE SLONG KHA CIG
TSUL KHRIMS DANG LDAN PA YIN TE, SO SOR THAR PA'I SDOM PAS BSDAMS
SHING GNAS, CHO GA DANG SPYOD YUL PHUN SUM TSOGS PA,

That is, a person who has failed to live an ethical way of life is imitating someone who does live this way of life. *The Pile of Jewels* explains this in a section beginning with:

O Kashyapa, there are some monks here who are following an ethical way of life; they keep their vows of individual freedom, and continue in this path. Their observance of the proper rituals, and the things they engage in, are excellent.

KHA NA MA THO BA PHRA RAB RNAMS LA'ANG 'JIGS PAR LTA BA, YANG
DAG PAR BLANGS TE BSLAB PA'I GZHI RNAMS LA SLOB CING LUS DANG
NGAG DANG, YID KYI LAS YONGS SU DAG PA DANG LDAN PAR GYUR PAS,
'TSO BA YONGS SU DAG KYANG

They fear committing even the slightest reprehensible deed, and they do what they should, and well—that is, they verse themselves in the foundations of the training, and possess purity in every action of their body, speech, and mind. And so the way they make their living is completely pure.

DA {%DE in original from Kangyur} BDAG TU SMRA BA YIN TE, 'OD SRUNGS DE
NI TSUL KHRIMS 'CHAL BA TSUL KHRIMS DANG LDAN PA LTAR BCOS PA
DANG PO'O ZHES BYA BA NAS,

Nonetheless, they assert that things are themselves; this then, O Kashyapa, is the first way in which a person who is failing to live an ethical way of life seems to be following one—and is only imitating those who do.

'OD SRUNGS GZHAN YANG 'DI LA DGE SLONG KHA CIG SBYANGS PA'I YON
TAN BCU GNYIS YANG DAG PAR BLANGS KYANG, DMIGS PAR LTA BA YIN TE
NGAR 'DZIN PA DANG NGA YIR 'DZIN PA LA GNAS PA DE NI, 'OD SRUNGS
TSUL KHRIMS 'CHAL BA TSUL KHRIMS DANG LDAN PA LTAR BCOS PA BZHI
PA STE, ZHES GSUNGS SO,,

And it continues in this vein up to:

Moreover, O Kashyapa, a number of monks engage—very purely—in the twelve traditional practices of a monk.² And yet still they are looking at things; which is to say, they are still living in a way where they grasp to some kind of “me,” and some kind of “mine.” This then, O Kashyapa, is the fourth way in which a person who is failing to live an ethical way of life seems to be following one—and is only imitating those who do.³

BDAG TU SMRA BA NI DMIGS PAR LTA BA'O, 'DE YANG NGA DANG NGA YIR
'DZIN PA LA GNAS PAS BSTAN TE, DE'I DON NI THUN MONG BA'I 'JIG LTA LA

² *Twelve traditional practices of a monk*: These twelve are rather fascinating, and deserve a listing here. A great source is *The String of Shining Jewels*, by Geshe Tsewang Samdrup (fl. 1835), an esteemed tutor of His Holiness the Tenth Dalai Lama; this has got to be my favorite classic on the three sets of vows. Here are the twelve he describes, abbreviated (see ff. 34a-35b, %B@, S00201):

- (1) Begging for ones daily food.
- (2) Eating this food only once per day.
- (3) Eating this food only in a single, uninterrupted sitting.
- (4) Wearing only the three religious robes.
- (5) Wearing robes only of inexpensive material (in Tibet, wool)
- (6) Wearing robes only of used or discarded cloth, dyed the proper color
- (7) Staying only in cloisters located well away from a population center
- (8) Making ones “bedroom” the ground at the base of a tree
- (9) Living there under the open sky
- (10) Never sleeping excessively; and, when sitting, always in an unsupported meditation posture
- (11) Using food, clothing, utensils, and bedding which have been discarded in a charnel ground
- (12) Making ones mattress only from piles of grass or leaves

It should be noted of course that the twelve elements of this extreme lifestyle were something appropriate to adepts in the cultural setting of ancient India; and that their application and modification to modern times should be accomplished only under the guidance of a qualified spiritual teacher.

³ *Only imitating those who do*: The entire section covers ff. 250b-251a of *The Account of Kashyapa, the Protector of Light*, which is one part of the scriptural collection known as *The Pile of Jewels (Ratna Kuta, %S14, KL00087E)*. The second and third forms of “imitation” are not directly excerpted by Je Tsongkapa; so here they are.

The former is when a monk engages in morality but “never stirs from the view of destruction,” which as we’ve seen above (at footnote %72) refers to viewing ourselves as though we are coming from somewhere other than the seeds we have planted in our interactions with others. The latter is where a monk feels love for others but at the same time feels uncomfortable—even fearful—of ideas they’ve heard from others about nothing ever starting (on its own).

MI BYA'I, NGA DANG NGA YI BA RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS GRUB PAR
'DZIN PA MI SPONG BA LA BYA'O,,

By the way, when the text here refers to a monk who “asserts that things are themselves,” it is actually referring to a monk who *views* things as being themselves. This is as well what the words “they are still living in a way where they grasp to some kind of ‘me,’ and some kind of ‘mine’ are referring to: the point is that they have yet to rid themselves of the idea that they and theirs exist by definition.

DE NI ZHES PA BSHAD MA THAG PA LA SNYOG TU MI RUNG BAS, GAL TE
RANG BZHIN TSUL KHRIMS RNAM DAG PAR, ,MTHONG NA DES DE TSUL
[@55a] KHRIMS 'CHAL BA YIN, ZHES NAG TSOS DES DE ZHES BSGYUR BA
LEGS SO,,

It’s important not to muddy the part [in the root text] following “they were”; as such, the way that Naktso has done the translation—saying “in this way then, they”—is preferable:

If they were to see
An ethical way of life
Which exists by nature as pure,
In this way then they’d fail
In this way of life.⁴

DMIGS PA CAN GYI LTA BA MI SPONG NA TSUL KHRIMS MI DAG PA DE'I
PHYIR, SA GNYIS PA BA DE NI, RTAG TU SEMS CAN GANG LA TSUL 'CHAL
SPONG BA DANG, SPONG GNYEN GANG ZHIG BYED PA DANG, GANG GIS
SPONG BA GSUM CHAR LA'ANG DNGOS PO DANG DNGOS MED LA SOGS PA'I
GNYIS KYI CHOS LA RANG BZHIN GYIS GRUB PAR LTA BA'I GNYIS SU 'DZIN
PA'I BLO'I RGYU BA YANG DAG PAR BRAL BAR TE SPONG BAR BYED PAR
'GYUR RO,,

If then we fail to rid ourselves of a point of view which still holds that there is something to view, then our attempt to follow an ethical way of life is no longer pure. Thus it is, a person at the second level is always “free of”—meaning, they have rid themselves of—their mind running in a way where it grasps to duality: where it looks upon dual divisions such as things which function and things which do not, and views them as existing by nature; and this applies to having this view towards any of the three of (1) the living beings towards whom one has rid themselves of failing to live an ethical way of life; (2) the spiritual antidote which one has employed to do so; and (3) the person who is ridding themselves of this failure.

⁴ *They fail in this way of life:* Refer to the reference to Naktso the Translator at footnote %205; his translation is no longer extant.

Enjoying the Fruits of Giving in the World Beyond

[,SBYIN PAS LONGS SPYOD DAG NI 'GRO NGAN NA'ANG,
,SKYE BO TSUL KHRIMS RKANG PA NYAMS LA 'BYUNG,]

**[When people who have practiced giving
Enjoy their wealth in a lower realm,
It's because the legs of an ethical life
Have failed them.**

II.13-14]

DANG PO NI, DE LTAR BYANG SEMS KYI TSUL KHRIMS PHUN SUM TSOGS PA
DANG LDAN PAR BRJOD NAS, DE'I 'OG TU SPYIR DE LAS GZHAN PA'I TSUL
KHRIMS PHUN SUM TSOGS KYANG, SBYIN SOGS LAS YON TAN SHIN TU CHE
BA DANG, YON TAN PHUN TSOGS THAMS CAD KYI RTEN DU GYUR PAR
STON PA NI,

Here then is the first. Now that we have described how this bodhisattva possesses a truly excellent ethical life, we move on to explain how—generally speaking—additional forms of this excellent ethical life bring us even more magnificent personal qualities, through being combined with giving and the rest; and how this way of life provides a foundation for each and every high personal quality.

SBYIN PA PO TSUL KHRIMS DANG LDAN PAS SBYIN PA BTANG BA LAS, LHA
MI'I NANG DU KHYAD PAR DU 'PHAGS PA'I LONGS SPYOD PHUN SUM TSOGS
PA DAG 'BYUNG RGYU

When someone who is following an ethical way of life engages in the *practice of giving*, this acts as a cause for them to enjoy excellent wealth—a truly superior form of wealth—within a rebirth among pleasure beings or humans.

DE NI, 'GRO BA NGAN PA NGAN 'GROR LHUNG BA'I NYI TSE BA'I [@55b]
DMYAL BA DANG, BA LANG DANG RTA DANG GLANG PO CHE DANG SPRE'U
DANG, KLU LA SOGS PA DANG YI DVAGS RDZU 'PHRUL CHEN PO LA SOGS
PAR SKYES PA LA, LONGS SPYOD PHUN SUM TSOGS PA SNA TSOGS PA
'BYUNG BA NI, SKYE BO TSUL KHRIMS KYI RKANG PA NYAMS PA STE BRAL
BA LAS 'BYUNG NGO,,

But *when* this same practitioner must *enjoy their excellent wealth within* one of the *lower* rebirths—falling into the *realms* of misery; taking their birth for example within a hell on earth; or as a cow, or a horse, or an elephant; or as a water dragon or the like; or as a craving spirit possessed of miracle powers—then *this is because* “*the legs of an ethical life have failed them*”: meaning that they failed to follow this way of life.

DE NI TSUL KHRIMS DANG BRAL NA DES SBYIN PA BTANG BA'I 'BRAS BU LONGS SPYOD RNAMS, BDE 'GRO'I RTEN LA MI SMIN PAR NGAN 'GRO'I RTEN LA SMIN PAR 'GYUR BAR BSTAN PAS,

What's being taught at this point is that—if a person like this has failed to follow the ethical life—then none of the wealth that they are to experience as a result of their practice of giving will come back to them in the body and mind of a being living in the higher realms; rather, it will come to them as they live in the form of a being living in the lower realms.

SBYIN 'BRAS BDE 'GRO'I RTEN LA SMIN PA CIG DGOS PAS DE 'DOD NA, SNGAR BSHAD PA'I SBYIN PA GTONG BA POS TSUL KHRIMS BSRUNG BAR BYA'O.,

What we need is for the fruits of our giving to come back to us in the body and mind of a person in the higher realms; and if they want that to happen, then the person that we described above—the person engaged in the practice of giving—must honor their moral code.

Keeping it Going

[,BSKYED BCAS DNGOS 'DU YONGS SU ZAD PAS NA,
,PHYIN CHAD DE LA LONGS SPYOD 'BYUNG MI 'GYUR,]

**[When you splurge the accumulated capital
From which you are earning your interest,
You will have nothing more
That can bring you wealth later on.**

II.15-16]

GNYIS PA NI, TSUL KHRIMS DANG BRAL NA SBYIN 'BRAS NGAN 'GRO'I RTEN LA SMIN PA DANG, RTEN DE LA SNGAR GYI SBYIN PA'I 'BRAS BU LONGS SPYOD PA TZAM YIN GYI,

Here next is our second point from above: how enjoying the fruits of these acts of giving in a succession of lifetimes depends upon continuing to follow an ethical way of life. If we fail to follow an ethical way of life, then the fruits of our giving will come back to us as we live in the body and mind of a being in the lower realms; and in this body and mind we will enjoy nothing more than the wealth which results from the giving we did in our former body and mind.

SHIN TU BLUN PAS GSAR DU SBYIN SOGS SGRUB PA MED PA'I PHYIR,
SKYED DANG BCAS PA'I DNGOS PO 'DU BA STE RTZA BA LA SPYAD PAS
YONGS SU ZAD PAS NA, SNGON GYI SBYIN 'BRAS MA LUS PA LONGS SPYOD
PA PHYIN CHAD NAS GANG ZAG DE LA LONGS SPYOD 'BYUNG BAR MI
'GYUR RO,,

And then—since in our new circumstances our mind is so foolish—we will follow none of the practices of giving and the rest. That is, we will *splurge the accumulated capital from which we are earning our interest*: we will use up all our equity. A person like this enjoys every one of the fruits of our previous acts of giving, and then *later on they have nothing more that can bring them any wealth*.

DE NI DPER NA SA BON NYUNG DU {%NGU?} BTAB PA LAS, 'BRAS BU RGYA
CHEN PO RNYED PA'I MI DE SLAR YANG 'BRAS BU'I CHED DU, DE BAS
KYANG CHES MANG BA'I SA BON 'DEBS PA NI, 'BRAS BU'I TSOGS CHEN PO
'PHEL BAS MA CHAD PA YOD KYI,

To present this in terms of a metaphor, suppose there is a person who plants a small seed, and from it gains major fruits. And then, in order to enjoy even further fruits, they plant massive amounts of the resulting seeds. The multiplication of masses of fruits then continues in an ever-increasing upward cycle.

GANG ZHIG BLUN PO NYID KYIS SA BON TZAM YANG MI 'DEBS PAR LONGS
SPYOD PA LA NI, 'BRAS BU MA CHAD PAR 'PHEL BA MED PA DANG 'DRA'O,,

But someone who is nothing more than a fool refuses to replant even a single seed; and so their wealth never increases at all—for them, there is none of this ever-increasing upward cycle.

Freedom from the Lower Realms is Impossible

[,GANG TSE RANG DBANG 'JUG CING MTHUN GNAS PA,
,GAL TE 'DI BDAG 'DZIN PAR MI BYED NA,
,G-YANG SAR LHUNG BAS GZHAN DBANG 'JUG 'GYUR BA,
,DE LAS PHYI NAS GANG GIS SLONG BAR 'GYUR,]

**[Suppose a person
Who is free to do whatever they want
In a land that suits all their needs
Cannot restrain themselves;
They will fall into the abyss,**

**Living under the will of others.
And then later
Who could ever get them out?**

II.17-20]

GSUM PA NI, TSUL [@56a] KHRIMS KYI RKANG PA CHAG PAS LONGS SPYOD
RGYUN PAR 'PHEL BA RNYED DKA' BA 'BA' ZHIG TU MA ZAD KYI, NGAN
'GROR SONG BAS NGAN 'GRO NAS THON PA YANG SHIN TU RNYED DKA'O,
ZHES STON PA NI,

Here is the third point from above, a presentation about how difficult it is to find freedom from the lower realms, if we lack an ethical way of life. The next lines of the root text are describing how difficult it is, for a person whose ethical legs are broken, to achieve not only an upward cycle of ever-increasing wealth; but how infinitely more difficult it is for them to manage to get themselves out of the lower births, once they have gone there.

GANG GI TSE DPA' BO MTHUN PA'I YUL NA GNAS PA, 'CHING BA LAS GROL
BA LTAR, GZHAN LA RAG MA LUS PAR RANG GI 'DOD PAS RANG DBANG DU
'JUG CING,

Suppose then there is a warrior—one who is living *in a land that suits all their needs*; a warrior who has freed themselves of the chains that they wore before. They are *free to do whatever they want* to do—anything their heart desires—without being dependent on anyone else.

MTHUN PA'I YUL LHA MII 'GRO BA NA GNAS PA NA, GAL TE GANG ZAG 'DI
BDAG NYID NGAN 'GROR LTUNG BA LAS 'DZIN PAR MI BYED NA, DPA' BO
BCINGS NAS RI SUL CHEN POR BSKYUR BA LTAR, NGAN 'GRO'I G-YANG SAR
LHUNG BAS RANG LA DBANG MED PAR GZHAN DBANG GIS 'JUG PA'I TSE,
NGAN 'GROR SONG BA DE LAS PHYI NAS TE DA GZOD GANG GIS SLONG
BAR BYED DE DE LTAR BYED PA MED DO,,

Now suppose there is a person who is living in the realms of pleasure beings and humans, but who *cannot restrain themselves* from dropping to the lower realms: *they will fall into the abyss* of the lands of misery then—as if the warrior were put back into his chains and thrown off a high cliff. Now he *lives under the will of others*, with no freedom to do as he chooses. *And then later* on, after this point, *who could ever get them out* of the lower realms they had fallen into? It would be impossible.

NGAN 'GRO'I RTEN LA NI DGE BA SGRUB PA SHIN TU DKON LA, SDIG PA SOG
PA LA SHIN TU THU BAS NA, NGAN 'GRO KHO NAR BRGYUD DGOS SO,,

It is extremely rare for a person who possesses the body and mind of a being in the lower realms to accomplish any good deeds at all; their tendency to accumulate even more negative deeds is infinitely worse, and so they enter a downward cycle, which keeps them only in these realms of misery.

DE NYID KYI PHYIR MDO SDE LAS KYANG, BRGYA LA GAL TE MI RNAMS
KYI NANG DU SKYES NA YANG, RNAM PAR SMIN PA GNYIS SGRUB STE,
ZHES MIR SKYE BA DKA' BAR GSUNGS SO,,

This is exactly why the sutras describe how difficult it is to be born as a human being, in lines like—

Even in the remote chance
That they are born among humans,
Their previous deeds

Will come back to them in two ways...¹

DES NA DA LTA NAS RANG NYID NGAN 'GROR MI LTUNG BAR GZUNG DGOS
LA, DE YANG TSUL KHRIMS LA 'BAD PA BYED PA YIN PAR SHES PAR GYIS
SHIG

Thus it is that we must—from this very moment—hold ourselves back from falling into the realms of misery; and you must realize that, to do this, you must make great efforts in maintaining an ethical way of life.

¹ *Even in the remote chance*: Je Tsongkapa is using the citation as scriptural support from the Buddha for the statements here on the difficulty of attaining a human rebirth; but the quotations incidentally provide further information for us on the problems of failing to follow an ethical way of life. First, we hear that this failure will lead us to a rebirth as an animal; and then that “we will be led to the realms of the Lord of Death” (in his capacity as the King of Hell); and then that we will indeed be led to hell.

But in the rare event, say the sources, that we *do* achieve a rebirth as a human, then for each of the negative deeds in the traditional list of ten, our karma will come back to us in two different ways. Three different sutras contain the wording found here: one entitled *Displaying Emanations to the Objects of the Activities of the Bodhisattvas, the Objects of their Skillful Means* (%S75, KL00146, ff. 86a-87a); *The Sutra Requested by Sagara Mati* (the medium-length version, at %S76, KL00154, ff. 309a-310b); and the third part of *The Majority of the Enlightened One, in Extensive Detail* (in *The Section on the Ten Levels*, %S35, KL00044-3, ff. 101a-102b). Although there are slight differences in the vocabulary, they concur on the two ways that these deeds come back, and these can deepen our knowledge of the ten:

(1) The act of killing causes us, even if born as a human, both to have a shorter life and to be plagued by many illnesses during that life.

(2) Stealing causes us both to live in poverty, and to live in a situation where none of our few possessions is truly our own—they are always owned in common with others.

(3) Sexual misconduct causes us to be surrounded by people who are rude and cruel; and to have many rivals for our partner.

(4) Lying causes us to have many people criticizing us, and misleading us.

(5) Divisive talk causes a lack of unity in the people around you; and in general a bad attitude among these people.

(6) Harsh words causes us to constantly be surrounded by people saying unpleasant things to each other and ourselves; and arguing.

(7) Idle talk causes people not to respect what we say; and for us to lack confidence.

(8) Desire for others' things causes us to be constantly dissatisfied; and to experience great desire for things in general.

(9) Satisfaction with others' problems causes us not to get help when we seek it from others; and to have the habit of hurting others.

(10) Holding wrong views about reality causes us to fall deeper into harmful viewpoints; and to become a deceitful person.