

THE LAMP FOR THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT



Atisha's Root Text with a Commentary by
Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye



Translated by Khenpo David Karma Choephel

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THE LAMP FOR THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

In Sanskrit: *Bodhipathapradīpa*

In Tibetan: *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*

In English: *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*

I prostrate to the youthful bodhisattva Manjushri.

1.

I prostrate with immense respect to all the Victorious Ones
Of the three times as well as to their Dharma and the Sangha.
Upon the urging of my good disciple Jangchup Ö,
I shall illuminate the lamp for the path to enlightenment.

2.

Know that there are three kinds of persons—
Lesser, middling, and supreme.
I shall write clearly distinguishing
Each of their characteristics.

3.

Those who by whatever means
Pursue for their own sake
Merely the pleasures of samsara
Are known as the lowest persons.

4.

Turning their backs on worldly pleasures,
And spurning all acts that are misdeeds,
Those who seek peace for just themselves
Are called the middling persons.

5.
Those persons who, from the suffering
In their own being, truly wish
To fully end all miseries
Of others are supreme.

6.
For those great beings who desire
Supreme enlightenment,
I shall explain the perfect methods
That the gurus taught.

7.
Facing a painting of the Buddha
And so forth, a stupa, and the True,
Make offerings of flowers, scents,
And all the things you own

8.
As well as the seven offerings
Taught in Samantabhadra's prayer.
Resolving to never turn back till
The essence of enlightenment,

9.
Have sincere faith in the Three Jewels,
Kneel down with one knee on the ground,
Then join your palms, and first of all
Go three times for refuge.

10.

Beginning with an attitude
Of loving-kindness for them all,
Regard all sentient beings who suffer
In the three lower realms or else
From birth and such or death and so forth.

11.

Wishing to liberate all beings
From the suffering of suffering,
From sufferings, and their reasons,
Arouse the irreversible
Resolve to attain enlightenment.

12.

In the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sutra*,
Maitreya has explained in full
The qualities of thus arousing
Aspirational bodhichitta.

13.

Read sutras or else listen to a lama,
And learn the limitless qualities of the mind
Of perfect enlightenment. Then as a reason,
Repeatedly rouse bodhichitta thus.

14.

Here I will cite three verses from
The Sutra Requested by Viradatta
That briefly summarize its merits
As they have been explained.

15.

“If the merit of bodhichitta
Were to have a form,
It would fill all the realms in space
And yet be even greater.

16.

“If someone were to fill with jewels
As many buddha realms
As there are sand grains in the Ganges
And offer them to the buddhas,

17.

“The offering of someone who
Joined palms and imagined bowing
To enlightenment would be far greater,
For it does not have any limits.”

18.

After rousing aspirational bodhichitta,
Always enhance it with abundant efforts.
To remember it in other births as well,
Properly keep it as has been explained.

19.

Without the vow of engaged bodhichitta,
Perfect aspiration will not grow.
You want the wish for enlightenment to grow,
So surely make the effort to take the vow.

20.

If you continually maintain a vow—
One of the seven pratimoksha vows
Or else another—you’ve the fortune for
The bodhisattva vow, not otherwise.

21.

Among the seven kinds of pratimoksha,
In explanations by the Tathāgata,
The glory of chaste conduct is supreme:
This is intended as the bhikshu vows.

22.

Take the vow through the ritual
Described in the chapter on discipline
Of *The Bodhisattva Levels* from
A good, well-qualified lama.

23.

One skilled in the vow ceremony,
A person who lives by the vow
And has the patience and compassion
To give the vows, is a good lama.

24.

In case you are unable to find
Such a lama despite your efforts,
I'll properly explain another
Ritual to take the vow.

25.

Here I shall clearly write of how
When he was Ambarāja long ago,
Manjushri aroused bodhichitta
As was described within *The Sutra
Of the Array of Qualities
Of Manjushri's Buddha Realm*.

26.

“In the presence of the guardians,
I make the resolve of bodhichitta.
I invite all beings as my guests—
I’ll liberate them from samsara,

27.

“From this day on till I achieve
Supreme enlightenment,
I’ll have no thoughts of malice, anger,
Stinginess, or envy.

28.

“I’ll cultivate chaste conduct and
Give up wrongdoing and desire.
With joy in the vows of discipline,
I’ll train in following the buddhas.

29.

“I’ll take no delight in quickly gaining
Enlightenment for myself.
With just one being as a reason,
I’ll stay until the end of time.

30.

“I’ll purify inconceivable,
Limitless numbers of realms.
I’ll be remembered by my name,
Which will remain in the ten directions.

31.

“In every way I’ll purify
My deeds of body and speech.
I’ll cleanse my mental acts as well—
I shall do nothing unvirtuous.”

32.

The cause of a pure body, speech, and mind
Is keeping the vow of engaged bodhichitta.
Practicing the three trainings of discipline well,
Your respect for the three trainings will be great.

33.

Thus effort at the *sattva's* vows
For pure and perfect awakening
Perfects the accumulations for
Complete enlightenment.

34.

All the buddhas say the cause
Of perfecting the accumulations
Whose natures are merit and pristine wisdom
Is to develop clairvoyances.

35.

Just as a bird whose wings aren't fledged
Cannot fly in the sky,
Without the powers of clairvoyance,
One cannot benefit beings.

36.

The merits that those with clairvoyance
Attain in one day and night
Aren't gained in even a hundred lives
By those who do not have it.

37.

Those who wish to swiftly complete
The accumulations for perfect bodhi
Accomplish the clairvoyances
Through effort, not through laziness.

38.

Without achieving shamatha,
Clairvoyances will not occur.
Thus make repeated efforts to
Accomplish shamatha.

39.

If the requisites for shamatha
Are lacking, one might meditate
Tenaciously for thousands of years
But never accomplish samadhi.

40.

Thus maintain well the requisites
Taught in the *Requisites for Samadhi*.
On any of the focuses,
Rest your mind on virtue.

41.

When yogis achieve shamatha,
They also gain clairvoyances.
Without the training in transcendent prajna,
The obscurations cannot be removed.

42.

Thus, to abandon all the obscurations—
The cognitive along with the afflictive—
Meditate continually on the yogas
Of transcendent prajna with its means.

43.

Prajna without the skillful means
And means that lack the prajna
Are bondage, it is said, and thus
Don't discard either one.

44.

To eliminate any doubts about
What prajna is and what means are,
I'll clarify the difference
Between skillful means and prajna.

45.

Apart from the transcendent prajna,
All of the virtuous qualities
Such as transcendent generosity
Are means, explained the Victor.

46.

Those beings who meditate on prajna
Swiftly achieve enlightenment
By cultivating means, not just
By meditating on selflessness.

47.

Prajna is taught to be the knowing
Of inherent emptiness
That realizes the aggregates,
Elements, and sense bases don't arise.

48.

It is not logical for the existent
To arise, nor for the nonexistent
Such as sky flowers. Both faults would apply,
So that which is both has no arising either.

49.

Things do not arise from themselves,
Nor from another, nor from both,
Nor without cause, and for that reason
Inherently they have no nature.

50.
Or else when analyzing whether
All dharmas are single or multiple,
No essence is observed and thus
They're ascertained to have no nature.

51.
The logics in the *Seventy Verses*,
Root Middle Way, and other texts
Explain how it's established that
The nature of all things is emptiness.

52.
Because this text would be too long,
I've not elaborated here.
But for the sake of meditation
I've merely taught the tenets they prove.

53.
Therefore the natures of all dharmas
Cannot be not observed and thus
Meditating on selflessness
Is meditating on prajna.

54.
Just as prajna sees no nature
Of any phenomenon at all,
Meditate with the logics taught
On prajna itself, free of thought.

55.
The character of this existence,
Born from thought, is thought.
Therefore abandoning all thought
Is the supreme nirvana.

Accordingly, the Bhagavan has also said:

56.

“Thought—the great ignorance—makes us
Fall into the ocean of samsara.
Resting in thought-free samadhi,
Nonthought is clear as the sky.”

From *The Dharani of Entering Nonthought* as well:

57.

“When the victors’ children, without thought,
Contemplate the True Dharma,
They transcend thoughts so hard to escape
And eventually achieve nonthought.”

58.

Once you are certain from the scriptures
And logic that all phenomena
Have no arising and no nature,
Meditate without thoughts.

59.

Thus as you meditate on suchness,
Warmth and so forth are gained in turn.
Then you’ll achieve the Truly Joyous—
It won’t be long till buddhahood.

60.

If you wish to easily perfect
The accumulations for enlightenment
Through pacifying, enriching, and the other
Activities achieved from mantra’s power

61.

And through the power of the eight great *siddhis*
Of accomplishing the fine vase and so forth—
If you wish to practice the secret mantra
Taught in the action, conduct, and other tantras—

62.

Then to receive the empowerment
Of the vajra master, please the guru
With service and offerings of wealth
As well as by carrying out commands.

63.

When a guru who is pleased bestows
The full empowerment of the master,
Your misdeeds will all be purified;
You'll have the fortune to gain the *siddhis*.

64.

The great tantra of the primordial buddha
Emphatically prohibits it,
So the celibate should never take
The secret and *prajna* empowerments.

65.

If those who practice celibacy
Had those empowerments
And did what is prohibited,
The vows of discipline would be broken

66.

And the practitioners would incur
A downfall that is a defeat.
They'd fall into the lower realms—
Accomplishment would elude them.

67.

For those who've received the master empowerment
Or who have known suchness, there's no fault
In teaching or listening to any tantra,
Performing a fire puja, offering, or so forth.

68.

Upon the supplication of Jangchup Ö,
I, the Elder Dipaṅkara Śrī,
Explained in brief the path of enlightenment
As I've seen taught in sutras and other Dharma.

This concludes The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment written by the great master Dipaṅkara Śrī Jñāna. It was translated and finalized by the great Indian abbot himself and the great translator and editor Geway Lodrö. This Dharma was written in the Tholing Temple in Zhang Zhung.

A BRILLIANT LIGHT ON THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

A Commentary Encapsulating the Essence of
The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

I prostrate to the youthful Noble Manjushri.

I prostrate with great respect at the feet of the guru, the King of the Shakyas.

The flowers of his marks, endowed with a hundred merits,
Are beautified by the anthers of the signs.
The sound of his drum, melodious with the sixty traits,
Teaches the path of freedom to disciples of the three families.
On the face of mirror in the sky of pristine wisdom,
Reflections of the knowable are distinctly clear.
From our hearts we recollect the kindness of our supreme teacher—
Please nurture us with compassion.

For those who made the supreme resolve and entered the paths,
Dwelling on the levels up to the end of their continuum,
And that which is their origin, the exalted jewel of mind,
As well for the sun and moon mandala of that which teaches that,
The fine teachings with the threefold virtue—for these I have faith.
May the lotus of my longing mind be freed in all existences.

Through infinite miracles he taught without mistake
The path of liberation in the Land of Snows.
I prostrate to the protector Atisha, the son of the victors,
Whose banner of renown flies high in the three realms.

Those who uphold his lineage and teach his words
As pith instructions are the string of pearls
Of the old and new traditions, strung on liberation's golden thread.
With the faith of belief, I fix them to the crown of my head.

Merely hearing it emancipates one from existence
Practicing accomplishes one's ultimate wish.
This text is like stainless *vaidurya*—
It alone is the crown jewel for all beings in Land of Snows.

Though many great masters have thoroughly clarified
This text, which is as famous as the sun and moon,
To easily fill the little vases of those whose intellect equals mine,
I will expound a bit upon the quintessential nectar of a textual commentary.

The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment condenses the main points of all the scriptures of the Victors, which lead to the level of omniscience, without leaving any out; distills the Dharma traditions of the supreme beings, the great chariots that are the traditions of Nagarjuna and Asanga; and contains the stages of practice for the three kinds of persons, not omitting anything. This explanation of it has two sections: I. The branches of the explanation, and II. The meaning of the actual instructions.

THE BRANCHES OF THE EXPLANATION

The scholars of Vikramaśīla considered it important to begin by teaching the greatness of the author in order to show the eminence of the source of the dharma, the greatness of the dharma in order to instill respect in the pith instructions, and the manner in which the dharma that has those two greatnesses should be explained and listened to. Accordingly, I will explain those briefly here.

First, the author of this text is a bodhisattva of the fortunate aeon who intentionally took birth in the *mahākṣatriya* caste in the land of Zahor. He learned many scriptures from the three baskets and gained all the qualities of scripture; by practicing them properly, he gained all the qualities of

realization. Through the dharma, he then defeated the fallacious speech of non-Buddhists three times in the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya. Through these and other such deeds, he performed vast activity on behalf of Buddhism in both India and Tibet. In particular, he went to Tibet, turned infinite wheels of the profound and vast Dharma, and wrote this text, reestablishing through these and other undertakings Buddhist traditions that had disappeared and clarifying those traditions that were partially extant. Whether directly or indirectly, he thus guided everyone onto the unmistakable paths to the higher states and true excellence. Such was the great paṇḍita known as Glorious Lord Atisha. As is said in Naktso Lotsawa's *Eighty Verses of Praise*:

If Atisha had not come to Tibet,
It would have been as if all were blind.
Because you with great knowledge came,
The sun of prajna shone in Tibet.

Second is the greatness of the dharma. This text, *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, condenses the essence of all the scriptures of the Sage, the sole lamp of the three worlds. It teaches the traditions of the two great chariots, the pith instructions of the rivers of three lineages combined, the great path to higher states and true excellence, the key to all the sutras and commentaries, the path followed by all the scholars and masters of India and Tibet, and everything that must be practiced by the three types of persons. As it contains the main points of both the sutras and tantras, its topic is perfectly complete. As it teaches the stages for taming beings, it is easy to put into practice. As it is adorned with the advice of lamas who are learned in the traditions of both great chariots, it is superior to other traditions. Third is the manner in which the dharma with those two greatnesses should be explained and listened to. The instruction manuals on the stages of the path to enlightenment give detailed instructions on how to listen, how to teach, and in the end what both teacher and listener should do. This should be known as it is taught in those texts.

THE MEANING OF THE ACTUAL INSTRUCTIONS

This has four topics: A. The meaning of the title, B. The translators' prostration, C. The meaning of the text, and D. Concluding points.

THE MEANING OF THE TITLE

In Sanskrit, one of the four great languages in the Noble Land of India, the title of this text is *Bodhipathapradīpa*. In Tibetan, it is translated as *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma* (*The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*). *Bodhi* means enlightenment, *patha* means path, and *pradīpa* means lamp.

The wisdom of a buddha, which is essentially the culmination of abandonment and realization, has entirely purified (*byang*) the two obscurations and their imprints and fully realizes (*chub*) the nature and variety of all phenomena without exception, so it is enlightenment (*byang chub*). Because this treatise dispels all the darkness of uncomprehension, misapprehension, and doubt—the impediments to the path that leads there—and illuminates the nature of the ten levels and five paths, it is called a lamp.

The reasons to give the Sanskrit title at the beginning of the translation of the treatise are to recognize the eminence of the source of the dharma; to instill grateful appreciation of the translators, panditas, kings, and ministers; to make imprints of the Sanskrit language; and so on.

THE TRANSLATORS' PROSTRATION

Before doing the translation, the translators state:

I prostrate to the youthful bodhisattva Manjushri.

This is put here to show that the treatise, although a commentary on the intent of all the Buddha's words in general, is primarily Mahayana abhidharma. It is also in order to be able to complete the translation and so forth.

THE MEANING OF THE TEXT

This has three topics: 1. The homage and pledge to compose, 2. The explanation of the actual text, and 3. The cause for writing this text.

1. THE HOMAGE AND PLEDGE TO COMPOSE

I.

I prostrate with immense respect to all the Victorious Ones
Of the three times as well as to their Dharma and the Sangha.
Upon the urging of my good disciple Jangchup Ö,
I shall illuminate the lamp for the path to enlightenment.

At the outset of writing this treatise, Atisha prostrates to all the buddhas of the three times, who have defeated the cause, misdeeds, and been victorious in battle over the Maras, the results of misdeeds. He also prostrates to their Dharma—the collection of scriptures that are the Dharma teachings given by those victors, the Dharma of accomplishment that they practice, and the Dharma of the realization they manifest—and the Sangha, those who have gained faith through knowledge of the sources of refuge and virtue and thus aspire toward them in union. These are the eight types of beings who are entering or abiding in a result,¹ the pratyekabuddhas,² and those on the bodhisattva levels. Seeing the qualities of a source of refuge in those to whom he prostrates, his mind guides his body and speech in prostrating with immense respect.

The purpose of prostrating is to quell obstructors and impediments and finish writing the treatise, to be in harmony with the conduct of the great and respectable, and to teach us followers to put this into practice.

After prostrating thus, what is to be done? you ask. There is a distinctive task to do:

Lha Lama Jangchup Ö was born in the family of the bodhisattva dharma kings as a master of the teachings. He was a bhikshu with unshakeable faith in the Jewels and eyes of prajna opened wide to the sutras and tantras. With much hardship, he brought Atisha to Tibet and delighted him with all manner of pleasing things, becoming one of his disciples with excellent, superior bodhichitta. Since various uninformed misunderstandings about the teachings had arisen in Tibet, he asked about what would be necessary to help the teachings in general at that time and so forth. He then urged Atisha to write a treatise that encapsulated in just a few words the meaning

of the entire Mahayana just as Atisha had practiced it himself. Thus Atisha will illuminate this treatise that is like a lamp that shines everywhere the light of the path to achieve unexcelled enlightenment. The purpose of thus making a commitment to write this lamp of the teachings is to complete the composition.

2. THE EXPLANATION OF THE ACTUAL TEXT

This has two topics: a. A brief presentation of the three persons, and b. Explanations of the characteristics of each of their paths.

A. A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE THREE PERSONS

What is the path to enlightenment referred to in the line “I shall illuminate the lamp for the path to enlightenment”?

2.

Know that there are three kinds of persons—

Lesser, middling, and supreme.

I shall write clearly distinguishing

Each of their characteristics.

In general the word “person” can refer to any sentient being. In this context, however, the Sanskrit word for person is *puruṣa*, which can mean either performing a purpose or capability. People are called such because they have the capability to accomplish the purposes of the next and following lifetimes. Because their intellect that can analyze what to do and what not to do for the next and following lives, they are called humans.³ “Person” or “human” here does not mean those who are only interested in this life. As it says in the *Handbook*:

Give up misdeeds from fear of the lower realms in the future.

From remembering the faults of samsara and wanting freedom,

Enter the three trainings by way of the four truths.

From fear of the Foundation vehicle, train in bodhichitta.

Such is the conduct of a human.

Other conduct is not anything.

The path that leads to unexcelled enlightenment has three paths: the lesser path to higher states, the common middle path to true excellence, and the supreme path of buddhahood itself. Thus it should be known that there are three paths for the three persons.

I shall write clearly—that is, easily understandably—the distinctions in the essences and features of each of the three paths by way of the characteristics that define their essences in terms of the different ways they are taught.

To elaborate on this here with a brief explanation of the general presentation of the path: When the Buddha roused bodhichitta in the beginning, gathered the accumulations in the middle, and woke to manifest perfect buddhahood in the end, it was all solely for the sake of sentient beings. Thus all the Dharma he taught is only to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings, which is twofold: the temporary higher states and the ultimate true excellence.⁴

Everything he taught starting from the first practices is contained within the dharma teachings that are common to the lesser person. Distinctive lesser persons do not give great importance to this life but long instead for the bounty of higher realms in the next life and apply themselves to its causes.

True excellence is twofold: liberation that is mere freedom from samsara, and omniscience. Everything the Buddha taught beginning from the vehicles of the listeners and pratyekabuddhas is included within the dharma teachings common to the middling person. Middling persons have wearied of all existence and act to achieve for their own benefit the liberation that is freedom from existence by applying themselves to the method for that, the three trainings.

There are two methods to achieve omniscience: the Great vehicles of the transcendences and of mantra. Both are contained within the dharma teachings for the greater person. As greater persons are under the power of great compassion, they act to achieve buddhahood in order to exhaust all the suffering of sentient beings and train in the six transcendences, two stages,⁵ and so forth.

These are described in this text in the verses starting from:

3.
Those who by whatever means
Pursue for their own sake
Merely the pleasures of samsara
Are known as the lowest persons.

Both the transcendences and mantra are taught below in the order of the paths of these persons. The term “the three persons” is used in the *Compendium of Ascertainment* and many commentaries on the *Treasury*.

There are lesser people who are intent on this life and those who intent upon the next. Here it is the latter, who are identified as those who engage in the unmistakable methods for the higher states.

Though three kinds of persons are taught, the path of the great person also includes the paths of the other two, so those two are branches of the Mahayana path, according to Master Aśvaghōṣa. Therefore some of the paths that are common to both the paths of lesser persons who act to achieve merely the pleasures of existence and middling persons who act to achieve merely liberation from samsara for their own benefit are taken as preliminaries to the path of the great person and made into aspects of the training for the path of the great person.

The reason for this is that the gate for entering the Great vehicle is rousing the bodhichitta resolve for supreme enlightenment. As it says in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*:

If they rouse bodhichitta, in an instant
The wretched fettered in samsara’s prison
Are named the offspring of the sugatas
And revered in the worlds of gods and humans.⁶

Those who develop that resolve in their beings gain the name “bodhisattva” and enter the Great vehicle on that support. If it declines, they leave the ranks of the Great vehicle. Therefore those who wish to enter the Great vehicle should strive in many ways to develop that resolve. To

develop it, first one should meditate on the benefits of arousing that resolve, and then one's enthusiasm for those benefits will grow. One should also perform the seven branch offering along with going for refuge, as said in the *Compendium of Trainings* and *The Way of the Bodhisattva*.

The benefits taught can be summarized as two: the temporary and the ultimate. The first is also twofold: not falling to lower realms and being born in higher realms. Those who develop that resolve will purify the causes of the lower realms they have previously accumulated and stop further accumulation. Previously accumulated causes of the higher realms are multiplied greatly when imbued with that resolve, and newly committed ones as well become inexhaustible, since they are motivated by that resolve.

The ultimate purpose of liberation and omniscience is easily achieved through that resolve, but if at first one lacks an uncontrived wish to attain those temporary and ultimate benefits, one might say, "Those benefits arise from bodhichitta, so I must strive to arouse bodhichitta," but it will just be mere words. Therefore one must first nurture the intentions that are in common with the lesser and middling persons in order to develop the wish for the two benefits, the higher states and true excellence. Thus after rousing the wish to achieve those two benefits, in order to meditate on the resolve that has those benefits, one must rouse the root of that resolve, loving-kindness and compassion. For those whose hairs stand on their ends without quivering when they think of how they themselves wander in samsara deprived of happiness and beset by suffering, there is no way not to strive on the behalf of other sentient beings who are deprived of happiness and tormented by suffering. From *The Way of the Bodhisattva*:

If sentient beings themselves have never
Had such a wish as this before
Even for their own sake in dreams,
How could they have it for another?⁷

Therefore during the phase of the lesser person contemplate the ways in which the suffering of the lower realms harms you, and during the phase of the middling person, contemplate how even in the higher realms there is

suffering and no happiness. Then infer from your own experience how it must be for sentient beings, who are your kith and kin, and meditate. This becomes the cause for developing loving-kindness and compassion, out of which bodhichitta arises. Thus training in the contemplations that are common with the lesser and middling people is the method for developing uncontrived bodhichitta.

Likewise, during both these phases one should strive to gather accumulations and purify oneself by going for refuge, karma and result, and so forth. There are methods to train your mind in the preliminaries for bodhichitta that are in the class of the seven branches including going for refuge. These can be understood from the section on arousing bodhichitta.

Here it is important to know the manner in which the dharma teachings of the lesser and middling become an element of developing bodhichitta, as without such an understanding, the path of the greater person and the individual paths become disconnected. In this way, do everything you can to develop uncontrived bodhichitta in your being.

Then in order to stabilize that resolve, first go for the uncommon refuge and do the ritual of the vows of aspirational bodhichitta. Once you have taken the vow of aspirational bodhichitta through the ritual, train its precepts. Then train your mind in wishing to train in the six transcendences, the four means of nurturing, and so forth. If you wish from the bottom of your heart to train, take the pure vows of engaged bodhichitta. Then keep from being tainted by the root downfalls even at the cost of your life and try not to be contaminated by small or medium defilements and infractions either. If you should become stained, purify the downfalls well as taught in the restoration rituals.

Then train in the six transcendences in general, and train in dhyana (which is shamatha in essence) in particular in order to be able to set your mind on a virtuous focus however you wish. This text says to train in shamatha in order to produce the clairvoyances, but that is merely an illustration. Atisha himself also said in other contexts that the purpose of shamatha is to develop insight, so accomplish shamatha for that reason. Then in order to cut the bonds of clinging to the two selves, gain certainty

in the view of emptiness and nurture meditation in an unmistakable manner and accomplish insight, the essence of prajna.

Training in the precepts of the vow of engaged bodhichitta beside the accomplishment of shamatha and insight is training in discipline. Shamatha is the training in mind and insight the training in prajna, according to the commentary. Additionally, everything up to and including shamatha is method, the accumulation of merit, the path that depends on relative truth, and the stages of the vast path. Developing the three distinctive prajnas is prajna, the accumulation of wisdom, ultimate truth, and the stages of the profound path. Gain great certainty in their order, number, and the fact that if means and prajna are divorced, enlightenment will not be achieved.

After purifying your being with the common paths, it is imperative to enter mantra, because you will quickly perfect the two accumulations if you do. If you are not willing to do so because of being unable to do that much or because your family or capacities are lesser, then just follow those stages of the path as extensively as possible. If you enter the mantra, follow the spiritual friend as described generally in all the vehicles and as taught in mantra in particular.

After your being has been ripened by empowerments that come from the pure classes of tantra, keep the commitments and vows received at that time even at the risk of your life. In particular, if a root downfall occurs, you can retake the vow, but your stream of being is wasted and it makes the qualities difficult to generate. Thus do not let yourself be stained by them. Do not let yourself be tainted by the secondary downfalls either. If one should occur, do not let it pass, thinking nothing of it. Purify it through confession and the resolve to never do it again. Then do either a yoga with attributes according to the lower tantras or the creation stage according to the higher tantra. On that basis, train in either the yogas without attributes according to the lower tantras or the completion stage yogas according to the higher tantras.

The Buddha spoke in *The Lord of Dharmas Requested by the King* of the necessity of gradually developing bodhichitta by comparing it to how a skilled jeweler gradually cleans a gem. The protector Nagarjuna also described the paths to higher states and true excellence as sequential:

First the dharma of the higher states
Arises, and later true excellence,
Because it is after reaching higher states
That one gradually comes to true excellence.

Āryadeva also said:

For sentient beings who are beginners
To enter the genuine purpose,
The perfect Buddha said the method
Is like a series of stairs.⁸

B. EXPLANATIONS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH OF THEIR PATHS

This has three topics: i. The characteristics of the lesser person, ii. The characteristics of the middling person, and iii. The characteristics of the greater person.

i. The characteristics of the lesser person

3.
Those who by whatever means
Pursue for their own sake
Merely the pleasures of samsara
Are known as the lowest persons.

Those people with the capacity to achieve benefit primarily for the next and following lives without attachment to this life who by whatever means—first the faith of belief in karma, cause, and result; then the discipline of abandoning the ten nonvirtues; and then the defiled dhyanas and Formless absorptions that are explained to be the “vehicle of gods” or “the vehicle of Brahma”—pursue to achieve for their own individual sake merely the ultimate human pleasures of a universal emperor or the samsaric pleasures from those of Indra up through the Formless seek existence and turn their back on benefitting others. Thus they are inferior the middling or greater persons and therefore known as the lowest persons taught here.

Generally among lesser people there are those who pursue the aims of

this life. However, since one must engage in the unmistakable methods for higher states, only the one type of lesser person is taught here without any other classifications.

The manner of following the spiritual friend is the basis of the paths of all three persons. If the friend is pleased, you begin to want to make the most of the human body with its pleasures and resources. If you do not develop the wish to make the most of this body with its pleasures or to accomplish Dharma, you will not be able to practice the paths of any of the three persons. Thus following the spiritual friend and the teachings on the precious human body are preliminaries for all three paths. When practicing the instructions, follow the spiritual friend and so forth in a definite sequence.

In order to develop the intent of the lesser individual, you must contemplate impermanence and the defects of the three lower realms. To accomplish the training, you must go for refuge, contemplate karma and results, and train in the discipline of giving up the ten nonvirtues. Thus there are four stages of contemplation for the main practice of the lesser person taught here.

ii. The characteristics of the middling person

4.
Turning their backs on worldly pleasures,
And spurning all acts that are misdeeds,
Those who seek peace for just themselves
Are called the middling persons.

From contemplating the many reasons for the suffering of all of samsara from the Incessant Hell to the Peak of Existence, they have no desire even in their dreams for the pleasures of a universal emperor and so forth. Thus they turn their backs on all the pleasures of existence and feel revulsion for it. This is the distinction of their intent. Motivated by that intent, they abide by the discipline of any one of the seven types of vow of individual liberation, whose essence is to spurn all unvirtuous acts that are misdeeds of

the three gates. This is the distinction of their training. Being an individual, with a support that has such an intent and training, who seeks just the nirvana that is the pacification of all their own suffering is the distinction of the result. Those who have those three distinctions enter the path to practice without mistake the true Dharma and are thus the person taught here. As they feel renunciation for all existence, they are superior to the lesser person, yet they lack the distinctive intention to bear the burden of the benefit of wanderers, so they are inferior to the greater. For this reason they are called “middling.”

To classify the middling person explicitly taught here, there are two in terms of the vehicle: those who have entered the vehicle of the listeners and of the pratyekabuddhas. In terms of what they meditate on, there are two: those who meditate on the four noble truths and those who meditate on the progression and reversal of the twelve links of interdependence. In terms of internal divisions, those who train in the discipline of the ten virtues with the intent to achieve liberation for themselves are lesser middling persons. Those who meditate on the four noble truths with the same intent are middling persons. Those with that intent who meditate on the egolessness empty of the two selves are the greater middling persons. In this way, the followers of the great Noble Nagarjuna and glorious Chandrakīrti say that in terms of the selflessness they meditate upon they can be classified in three: those who realize and meditate on the selflessness that is merely empty of a substantially existent self, on the selflessness of apprehended phenomena that is empty of external objects composed of partless atoms, and on the subtle selflessness that is empty of the inherent existence of individuals or phenomena other than conceptual projections. This is how the three kinds of individuals of the Foundation vehicle should be presented.

Regarding the actual practice of the middling person, Sharawa says that “turning their back on worldly pleasures” teaches the truth of suffering, “acts that are misdeeds” teaches the truth of the origin, “seek peace for just themselves” teaches the truth of cessation, and “spurning” teaches the truth of the path.

The path of the four noble truths is the primary meditation of those who want liberation and the main support of the path of the middling person, as the twelve links of interdependence are also contained within it. What those who seek liberation must comprehend is ascertained to twofold, the all-afflicted and the utterly pure. The former is ascertained to have two parts: the cause, the bonds of origin, and the result, the bondage of suffering. The latter is ascertained to be the two, the truth of cessation to be achieved and the truth of the path that achieves it.

The order is that just as the truth of suffering is taught first, those who want liberation first must contemplate thoroughly the defects of samsara in general and generate an uncontrived wish for freedom in particular. When they feel world-weary because of contemplating the suffering of samsara, they wonder what the cause of this samsara is, through which they see that samsara is created by the afflictions and defiled actions. Then they wish to abandon the origin, so following that, they meditate on the origin of samsara and stages of entering it. The principal origin is ignorance—the mind that engages the nature of the object erroneously. Once they know that can be eliminated, they see that they can make cessation manifest, so following that, the lower levels are taught, and they see that those are dependent on the path. Then the truth of path is taught. It is as the venerable Maitreya said:

Illness is to be known, its cause to be abandoned.

Health is to be achieved, medicine to be taken.

Likewise suffering, the cause, its cessation, and its path

Are to be known, eliminated, reached, and followed.⁹

iii. The characteristics of the greater person

This has two topics: (1) Overview, and (2) Detailed explanation.

(1) Overview

5.

Those persons who, from the suffering
In their own being, truly wish
To fully end all miseries
Of others are supreme.

When individuals who have arisen out of training their minds well in the paths of the lesser and middling persons see that they are tormented in the beginning, middle, and end by the samsaric suffering within their own being, they contemplate the suffering of those who similarly wander the oceans of existence, all sentient beings who have been their mothers, who are all, similar to himself, scorched by the blazing fires of all sufferings. Motivated by unbearable compassion for them, they truly wish to fully and irreversibly end all of their miseries and their causes, the two obscurations and their imprints. A person who dwells either in the precious resolve concurrent with the wish to benefit others to pursue the enlightenment that must be achieved or in the conduct of a bodhisattva which that motivates engages in the unmistakable methods to accomplish the Great vehicle. Therefore this is the characteristic of the supreme or great person taught explicitly here.

To classify great persons, there are two types in terms of the view, Mind Only and Middle Way. In terms of the vehicle, there are two, sutra and mantra. In terms of quickness, there are the five of the speed of an oxcart and so forth.¹⁰

(2) Detailed explanation

This has two topics: (A) An extensive explanation of the path of the transcendences, and (B) A brief teaching on how to engage in mantra.

(A) An extensive explanation of the path of the transcendences

This has two topics: (a) The presentation of the path, and (b) The presentation of the result.

(a) The presentation of the path

This has two topics: (i). The pledge to explain, and (ii). The explanation of the true path.

(i). The pledge to explain

6.

For those great beings who desire
Supreme enlightenment,
I shall explain the perfect methods
That the gurus taught.

“I shall explain” gives the basis of the explanation. What is to be explained? The methods that are indispensable for achieving unexcelled enlightenment. To whom? To those great beings who have awakened the Mahayana family and who have the pure superior intention of wishing to achieve the state of supreme enlightenment for the sake of others. In what manner? Not as a personal fabrication but properly with scripture and logic, following the words of the teachings of exalted gurus, Lord Suvarnavdipa and so on.

The two lines “For those great beings...” identify the vessels for whom this dharma is explained, and the two lines “I shall explain...” identify the nectar-like dharma. Within these, “the perfect methods” is the topic, “I shall explain” is the necessity, “That the gurus taught” is the distinction of the teaching, and “Supreme enlightenment” is the vital necessity. That these each depend upon another is the connection, which is easy to understand.

Well then, “I shall illuminate the lamp for the path to enlightenment” as well as “I shall write clearly distinguishing / Each of their characteristics” and “I shall explain the perfect methods” here are all commitments to explain. Are they redundant? There is no fault, because the first is the general pledge to compose the text in general, the second to explain the distinctions between the paths of the three persons, and the third to explain to those of the Mahayana family the unmistakable methods to achieve unexcelled enlightenment, so the manners of teaching are separate. Therefore this stanza “For those great beings...” is also taken as an

overview of the following text.

(ii). *The explanation of the true path*

This has two topics: 1. Aspirational bodhichitta and its training, and 2. Engaged bodhichitta and its training.

1. Aspirational bodhichitta and its training

This has three topics: a. Preparation, b. The actual vow, and c. The follow-through: training in the precepts.

a. Preparation

This has three points.

i. Gathering the accumulations

7.

Facing a painting of the Buddha
And so forth, a stupa, and the True,
Make offerings of flowers, scents,
And all the things you own

8ab

As well as the seven offerings
Taught in Samantabhadra's prayer.

As for what offerings one should make in the presence of which recipients, make the offerings facing in the direction of visible representations of the body such as paintings, sculpted figures, cast statues, and so forth of the perfect buddha Shakyamuni, representations of the mind such as stupas that contain relics, and representations of speech such as volumes of the True Dharma such as the twelve types of scriptures and so forth that are present and visible. Sharawa says that the grammar indicates prostrations as well.

What things should one offer? Flowers, incense, lamps, scents, and food—the things that can be enjoyed. Should one offer just the things one wishes to offer? One must offer all the things one owns, without anything

left over. It is told that Atisha once said, “You have a bushel of rice. You offer it all, the bodhichitta is excellent. You don’t offer it all, the bodhichitta is not excellent.” As these things are arranged, they are the visible offerings. Potowa said, “The offerings you put out, friends, should slice your heart and make you mad.”

To make mental offerings, perform the seven branches as described in Samantabhadra’s *Prayer for Excellent Conduct*: prostrations, offerings, confessing misdeeds, rejoicing, requesting, supplicating, and dedicating. These are called “offerings.” The meaning of offering is to please by giving, and those seven please the superior recipients.

ii. *Going for distinctive refuge*

8cd

Resolving to never turn back till
The essence of enlightenment,

9.

Have sincere faith in the Three Jewels,
Kneel down with one knee on the ground,
Then join your palms, and first of all
Go three times for refuge.

The distinctive time is until ultimately reaching the essence of enlightenment—until the dharmakaya has been manifested. The essence of enlightenment is twofold: the site that is the essence of enlightenment, and the realization essence of enlightenment. The former is twofold: the site that is the nirmanakaya’s essence of enlightenment is Bodhgaya, and the sambhogakaya’s is the Densely Arrayed in Akanishtha. The latter is the unexcelled wisdom kaya, according to Butön.

The distinctive motivation is the utterly steadfast resolve of great compassion focusing on all sentient beings to never turn back from holding the Three Jewels to be the source of refuge. With that resolve, arouse the distinctive intent—powerful, completely sincere faith from hearing of each of their qualities—in the precious Three Jewels, the distinctive source of

refuge. These are the Buddha, the culmination of abandonment and realization; the Dharma of scripture and realization; and the uncommon Sangha of irreversible noble bodhisattvas. With great enthusiasm, take the bodily posture of kneeling with either both knees on the ground or with the right knee down and the left raised, drape your upper robe over one shoulder, and join your palms in prayer. At the time of the ceremony of arousing aspirational bodhichitta, first of all recite the main portion of the ritual of going for refuge thrice, because the refuge vow is received on the third repetition.

Sharawa said that one does not go for refuge to the listeners not because they have few blessings but because it is as if the path is different and they are unable to accompany you. According to *The Ornament of the Sutras*:

Since it protects from every harm,
From lower realms, from the non-method,
From the transient and the lower vehicles,
It is the highest refuge.¹¹

The refuge of the lesser person is to go for refuge for protection from the lower realms and the wrong paths that are not the method. The refuge of the middling person is to go for refuge to liberate oneself from the defiled transient aggregates that are the samsaric suffering whose nature is formation. The refuge of the Mahayana is to fear the lower vehicles and then go for refuge to the uncommon Three Jewels in order to protect all sentient beings from the suffering of samsara.

Well then, is there distinction between going for distinctive refuge and aspirational bodhichitta? Potowa said that aspirational bodhichitta is wishing to achieve buddhahood for the sake of sentient beings, attaining buddhahood, and then liberating sentient beings like a merchant who provides an escort through his own strength. Going for distinctive refuge is wishing to free beings from suffering and then supplicating the Three Jewels who have the power to do that, like a shrewd merchant who relies on others to provide an escort. *The Ornament of the Sutras* says, “As this is truly wanting that, this promise should be known to come from

compassion,”¹² thus it is to make a promise out of the wish for buddhahood.

Here the causes, sources, essence, precepts, and benefits of refuge should be known from elsewhere.

iii. Training the mind in the three resolves

10.

Beginning with an attitude
Of loving-kindness for them all,
Regard all sentient beings who suffer
In the three lower realms or else
From birth and such or death and so forth.

11a-c

Wishing to liberate all beings
From the suffering of suffering,
From sufferings, and their reasons,

After gathering the accumulations and going for distinctive refuge, one must begin with an attitude of loving-kindness for all sentient beings, who have been our mothers, as this has been determined to be the cause of the compassion that is one of the seven factors of cause and result.¹³ Therefore once an intense affection that treasures all sentient beings as dear to your heart arises out of recognizing them as your mothers with gratitude and appreciation, meditate on compassion. Focus on the long duration and severity of the suffering of the three lower realms; the suffering of birth, aging, illness, death, and such for humans; and the suffering of dying and falling to lower realms for the six kinds of gods of the Desire realm. The phrase “and so forth” includes the suffering of being so intoxicated by samadhi in the two higher realms that they have no thought of Dharma and one does not gain any control.

In brief, one should regard with the eye of compassion all wandering beings who suffer from any of the three sufferings. In the three lower realms, there is the suffering of suffering. In the realms of the humans and Desire gods, the suffering of change, and in the upper realms there is the

suffering of formation. Contemplate those and the root that produces them, the origin that is karma and afflictions, as their causes. Then you must earnestly train your mind in the compassion that wants to free all wandering beings and the wish to achieve great enlightenment which that instills. This is because a sutra says, “Bodhisattvas, do not train in many dharmas. Train in one dharma. Which one? Great compassion.”

b. The actual vow

11de

Arouse the irreversible

Resolve to attain enlightenment.

After thus training well in the focus and aspects of loving-kindness and compassion, arouse precious bodhichitta by way of making a commitment to never ever be turned back from precious bodhichitta. Take the vows of aspirational bodhichitta through the ceremony with the volition to never give up for even an instant until you achieve enlightenment. After that, it is absolutely necessary to train in the five trainings below. The actual ritual for aspirational bodhichitta should be known from elsewhere.

c. The follow-through: training in the precepts

This has five points: i. Training in remembering the benefits, ii. Training in bodhichitta, iii. Training in gathering the two accumulations, iv. Training in not giving up on sentient beings, and v. Training in giving up and taking up the eight white and black dharmas.

i. Training in remembering the benefits

12.

In the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sutra*,

Maitreya has explained in full

The qualities of thus arousing

Aspirational bodhichitta.

The infinite qualities or benefits of thus (as previously described) rousing

aspirational bodhichitta through a ritual are described in the *Noble Gaṇḍavyūha Sutra* by over two hundred examples, such as: “Child of noble family, bodhichitta is like the seed of all the qualities of the Buddha. It is the field that grows the positive qualities of all beings...” This was explained in great detail to the bodhisattva Sudhana by the regent Maitreya.

ii. Training in bodhichitta

13.

Read sutras or else listen to a lama,
And learn the limitless qualities of the mind
Of perfect enlightenment. Then as a reason,
Repeatedly rouse bodhichitta thus.

14.

Here I will cite three verses from
The Sutra Requested by Viradatta
That briefly summarize its merits
As they have been explained.

Therefore bodhisattvas who have thus undertaken aspirational bodhichitta through the ritual should read for themselves the sutras and treatises or else study them well with a lama. Once you have learned decisively the limitless, innumerable qualities or benefits of the aspirational resolve that is focused on perfect enlightenment as taught in the sutras and so forth of the Great vehicle, as a reason or as the cause and condition for that resolve to remain in your being and increase without waning, thus rouse such bodhichitta over and over again—at least three times per day and three times per night. Even if you do not do a long ritual, arouse it as in the verse that comes from the texts of Atisha himself:

Until enlightenment, I go for refuge
To the Buddha, Dharma, and the supreme Sangha.
By acting generously and so forth,
May I become a buddha to help beings.

Well then, where are those boundless qualities of bodhisattva explained? you ask. There are three verses from *The Sutra Requested by the Householder Viradatta*¹⁴ that briefly summarize a passage where the merits and benefits of this bodhichitta are taught extensively. I will cite them here in this text as well.

15.

“If the merit of bodhichitta
Were to have a form,
It would fill all the realms in space
And yet be even greater.

Well, what are they like? you ask. The merit of developing the resolve of supreme enlightenment is not established as a form, but if it were to have a form, it would fill entirely all the realms of space in the ten directions to the bursting, and yet those benefits would be even greater than that—they would not fit.

16.

“If someone were to fill with jewels
As many buddha realms
As there are sand grains in the
Ganges And offer them to the buddhas,

17.

“The offering of someone who
Joined palms and imagined bowing
To enlightenment would be far greater,
For it does not have any limits.”

Furthermore, someone—a faithful person (the support)—might entirely fill as many buddha realms as there are grains of sand on the banks of the Ganges or as there are grains of sand dissolved as silt in that river (the distinction of the vessel) with the supreme lords of divine jewels (the distinction of the offerings) and give them as an offering to the protectors of the world, the buddha bhagavans (the distinction of recipient). However, the

offering of arousing bodhichitta made by an individual of the Mahayana family (the support) who joins their palms with faith in the presence of the Jewels or the guru and bows to or arouses the resolve of unsurpassable complete and perfect enlightenment is far superior to and greater than the former. For that reason, there are no limits to the merit of that bodhichitta.

iii. Training in gathering the two accumulations

18ab

After rousing aspirational bodhichitta,
Always enhance it with abundant efforts.

After arousing aspirational bodhichitta by way of both remembering its benefits and training in it in the six times,¹⁵ one must always enhance that resolve through abundant efforts at gathering the accumulations of merit and prajna by making offerings to the Jewels, serving the sangha, giving tormas to spirits, giving to the destitute, and so forth. From *A Talk on the Accumulations*:

“What accumulation of
Merit and prajna or what help
For another shall I do today?”
Repeatedly thinks the bodhisattva.¹⁶

iv. Training in not giving up on sentient beings

Shangrampa states that this is taught by the phrase “as well” in the line “To remember this in other births as well...” since he considers that the “as well” teaches that one must train in not letting bodhichitta weaken in one’s being in this lifetime, and bodhichitta is canceled by giving up on sentient beings. Some great beings have explained that this is most excellent.

v. Training in giving up and taking up the eight white and black dharma

18cd

To remember it in other births as well,
Properly keep it as has been explained.

In undertaking aspirational bodhichitta through a ritual as taught here, you might wonder whether is it enough just to train in the four causes for not to wane in this life by way of the four precepts taught above. It is not enough. In order to remember that resolve in other lifetimes and future births as well without forgetting, one should properly keep and observe the two sets of four precepts described in *The Sutra Requested by Kashyapa*.¹⁷

2. Engaged bodhichitta and its training

This has three topics: a. As a transition, teaching that one should take the vow of engaged bodhichitta, b. How to take the vow of engaged bodhichitta, and c. How to practice the trainings after taking the vow

a. As a transition, teaching that one should take the vow of engaged bodhichitta

19.

Without the vow of engaged bodhichitta,

Perfect aspiration will not grow.

You want the wish for enlightenment to grow,

So surely make the effort to take the vow.

Although you might thus develop the resolve of bodhichitta, it is impossible to waken to buddhahood if you do not train in the conduct of the bodhisattvas. If you do not take the bodhisattva vow, you might train in generosity and so forth, but they will not become the conduct of a bodhisattva. Those who have taken the stable vow of aspirational bodhichitta through the ceremony must take the vow that is the support for conduct, because without taking the vow that is inherently engaged bodhichitta, the resolve of aspiring for the highest perfection will not grow greater and greater. Therefore the necessity is that you must take the vow that focuses on perfect enlightenment (to give the name of the result to the cause) because you want the aspirational resolve to grow and reach its culmination. For that reason, without laziness or discouragement, you definitely must make great efforts to take the vow of engaged bodhichitta.

b. How to take the vow of engaged bodhichitta.

This has three topics: i. The support on which one may take it, ii. From whom it may be taken, and iii. The ceremony for taking it.

i. The support on which one may take it

20.

If you continually maintain a vow—
One of the seven pratimoksha vows
Or else another—you've the fortune for
The bodhisattva vow, not otherwise.

21.

Among the seven kinds of pratimoksha,
In explanations by the Tathāgata,
The glory of chaste conduct is supreme:
This is intended as the bhikshu vows.

One has the fortune for the bodhisattva vow on the support of one of the seven actual kinds of vows of individual liberation or of another vow that, in common with those, abandons the naturally unwholesome continually for as long as one lives. Otherwise the perfect bodhisattva vow will not arise, because the bodhisattva vow is the capacity to benefit others directly or indirectly, and one must stop that which is other than that, harming others and its basis.

However, the vows of individual liberation are canceled by dying, so you might wonder how they can be the bodhisattva vow's support. In the words of the great yogi, at first a staff acts as the support for an old person to get up, but later the old person holds the staff by its head to keep it from falling. Likewise the vows of individual liberation function as the support for it to first arise, but from then on until the essence of enlightenment, it is the bodhisattva vow that makes one not lose the renunciation of harm to others and its basis, it is said.

You might wonder whether there is a difference among the seven classes of individual liberation of being a better or worse support. It is as said in *The Lamp of the Moon*:

Of the three, the bhikshu is best.
The middling is called the novice.
The householder is lowest among them.¹⁸

You might also wonder, when someone with a vow of individual liberation takes the bodhisattva vow, does the vow transform or do they have both? Naktso's commentary says:

If you ask whether the two are the same vow or different, they are neither the same nor different. It is thus: the discipline of the vow is not anywhere other than in actions and so forth, and since whichever of the seven types of individual liberation one maintains is itself the discipline of a vow, they are the same. They are also different because individual liberation is asserted to be substantial and to be turning away from harming others and not causing harm, whereas the bodhisattva vow is asserted not to be substantial and to be accomplishing benefit for others. Thus they are also different, it is said.

ii. From whom it may be taken

22.
Take the vow through the ritual
Described in the chapter on discipline
Of *The Bodhisattva Levels* from
A good, well-qualified lama.

23.
One skilled in the vow ceremony,
A person who lives by the vow
And has the patience and compassion
To give the vows, is a good lama.

A lama who has the four qualities of the excellent prajna of being skilled in the methods of the ceremony of the bodhisattva vow—taking it properly, keeping it without violating it, and restoring it if it is violated—of being a person who lives by the excellent discipline of the bodhisattva vow, of

having the the excellent ability of patience or confidence to be able to give the bodhisattva vow, and of having the excellent, compassionate intent is known as a good lama. Shangrompa and others explain that of these, the first two are the principal ones.

iii. The ceremony for taking it

This has two topics: (1) The ceremony when a lama is present, and (2) The ceremony when a lama is not present.

(1) The ceremony when a lama is present

The vow of engaged bodhichitta should be taken from a good lama who has all the excellent, true qualifications by way of the ritual complete with its preparation, actual vow, and conclusion as described in the chapter on discipline from *The Bodhisattva Levels* by the Noble Asanga. The preparation has seven parts: supplication, rousing enthusiasm, gathering the accumulations, making a request, arousing the distinctive intent, asking about the common impediments, and briefly describing the precepts. The actual vow is to accept three times the training of all the victors of the ten directions and three times along with their offspring. The ritual for the conclusion has the five parts of requesting the buddhas to know, the benefits of entering the vision of wisdom, not rashly publicizing that you have taken the vows, a brief description of the precepts, and the offerings in thanks.¹⁹

(2) The ceremony when a lama is not present

This has two topics: (a) The commitment to explain according general and particular scriptures, and (b) Teaching the way to generate bodhichitta and hold the vow as it appears in the sutra.

(a) The commitment to explain according general and particular scriptures

24.

In case you are unable to find
Such a lama despite your efforts,
I'll properly explain another
Ritual to take the vow.

25.

Here I shall clearly write of how
When he was Ambarāja long ago,
Manjushri aroused bodhichitta
As was described within *The Sutra
Of the Array of Qualities
Of Manjushri's Buddha Realm.*

You might wonder what to do in case you make tremendous efforts to find such a qualified lama to take the vows as described but do not find one at all because of the time and place. There is particular method to take the vows yourself other than when a lama is present, because I will properly explain here the ritual to take the vow without a lama as it is taught in the scriptures. This is the commitment to explain.

What scripture is it taught in? you ask. Long ago—innumerable aeons in the past—when Manjushri was a universal emperor named Ambarāja or “Sky King,” he aroused the bodhichitta resolve for unexcelled enlightenment in the presence of the tathāgata King of the Thunderous Melody. The manner in which he did so is described in the *The Sutra of the Array of Qualities of Manjushri's Buddha Realm*. This is a commitment to explain in particular.

(b) Teaching the way to generate bodhichitta and hold the vow as it appears in the sutra

This has two topics. (i) Generating bodhichitta, and (ii) The manner in which to keep the vow.

(i) Generating bodhichitta

26.

“In the presence of the guardians,
I make the resolve of bodhichitta.
I invite all beings as my guests—
I'll liberate them from samsara,

In the presence of the guardians of all beings, the buddhas and

bodhisattvas, I make the resolve for unexcelled, completely perfect bodhichitta. This is for the sake of all sentient beings who reach the limits of space, none excepted, whom I invite as my guests. For their benefit, I shall liberate those beings who have not crossed the rivers of samsaric suffering, free those not freed from the bonds of the origin, relieve with the truth of the path those who because of the view of self are not relieved, and bring to nirvana through the truth of cessation those who have not completely transcended sorrow because of thought, thus inviting them as my guests.

Sharawa considers this to teach the preparation for engaged bodhichitta and the actual practice of aspirational bodhichitta.

(ii) The manner in which to keep the vow

This has three points.

A. The discipline of restraint from wrong acts

27.

“From this day on till I achieve
Supreme enlightenment,
I’ll have no thoughts of malice, anger,
Stinginess, or envy.

28.

“I’ll cultivate chaste conduct and
Give up wrongdoing and desire.
With joy in the vows of discipline,
I’ll train in following the buddhas.

From today, the day that I take the vow, until I reach unexcelled enlightenment, I will not have any of these four thoughts: malice, such as wishing to kill or so forth out of hatred based on any one of the nine causes of vindictiveness; anger of a mind agitated by competitiveness for others; stinginess of being unable to give your possessions to others; or envy of being unable to bear another’s prosperity. I’ll cultivate the chaste conduct of

abstaining from the copulation of genital contact and give up acts of wrongdoing and their cause, attachment to desired objects. With joy for the pure vows of discipline that abandon those, I shall train well in following the exalted conduct of the buddhas.

B. The discipline of benefitting beings

29.

“I’ll take no delight in quickly gaining
Enlightenment for myself.
With just one being as a reason,
I’ll stay until the end of time.

I’ll mentally take no delight in—feel no joy for—swiftly gaining enlightenment for myself. Instead, with bringing benefit to just one being as a cause, I will stay as long as there is samsara, without any final limit.

C. The discipline of gathering virtuous qualities

30.

“I’ll purify inconceivable,
Limitless numbers of realms.
I’ll be remembered by my name,
Which will remain in the ten directions.

31.

“In every way I’ll purify
My deeds of body and speech.
I’ll cleanse my mental acts as well—
I shall do nothing unvirtuous.”

If you wonder what to do while thus staying, I shall purify buddha realms whose number is inconceivable and beyond comprehension of faults such as ravines and thorns. I shall make my name be remembered by beings who hear it, and due to my wish to benefit beings even by sight, hearing, memory, or touch, my name will be renowned and remain in all the realms of the ten directions. In this way I shall purify the worlds of sentient beings

as well.

Since beginners must cherish the discipline of vows, the text repeats itself, again teaching that in all respects I will purify my actions of body and speech so that they are untainted by downfalls. I will cleanse my mental acts of downfalls as well. In brief, until I achieve enlightenment I will never in any way do any unvirtuous act of the three gates.

c. How to practice the trainings after taking the vow

This has three topics: i. How to practice the training in discipline, ii. The training in mind, and iii. The training in prajna.

i. How to practice the training in discipline

This has two points.

(1) Actual

32.

The cause of a pure body, speech, and mind

Is keeping the vow of engaged bodhichitta.

Practicing the three trainings of discipline well,

Your respect for the three trainings will be great.

What is the cause of purification of the three gates? you ask. The necessity is that it fully purifies the body, speech, and mind of downfalls and that it is a cause to bring the greatest benefit to sentient beings. For those purposes, those of the Mahayana family abide by the vows of engaged bodhichitta. Thus if they train properly and well with effort toward the object, the three trainings of discipline, by the power of habituation later their respect of cherishing the three trainings in discipline explained above will increase greatly.

Here the word “well” refers to the three qualities of being pure, irreversible, and completely perfect. By training in the discipline of restraint, one will become a person with an excellent and extremely pure body. By training in the discipline of benefitting, one will become irreversible from perfect enlightenment without ever faltering, as if fully

cured of a disease. By training in the discipline of gathering qualities, one becomes like a vase that has been excellently filled. The term “great bodhisattva” (*jangchup sempa chen po*) also comes from those three meanings, because the discipline of restraint purifies (*jang*) all faults, the discipline of gathering qualities increases (*chub*) all qualities, and the discipline of bringing benefit makes one into a great being (*sempa chenpo*), it is said.

(2) Its greatness

33.

Thus effort at the *sattva's* vows
For pure and perfect awakening
Perfects the accumulations for
Complete enlightenment.

By training in the three disciplines, your body, speech, and mind will become purified. Thus fully purifying the discards and completely perfecting the class of antidotes is the result, unexcelled enlightenment. Bodhisattvas who aim and wish to achieve this for others' sake make earnest efforts with great respect to maintain purely the vows that are, among the types of discipline, primarily the disciple of restraint by maintaining their mindfulness, awareness, and carefulness. This completely perfects the two accumulations of merit and prajna, the causes of complete enlightenment.

ii. How to practice the training in mind

This has two topics: (1) Training in shamatha in order to produce the clairvoyances, and (2) The actual manner of training in shamatha.

(1) Training in shamatha in order to produce the clairvoyances

34.

All the buddhas say the cause
Of perfecting the accumulations
Whose natures are merit and pristine wisdom
Is to develop clairvoyances.

35.

Just as a bird whose wings aren't fledged
Cannot fly in the sky,
Without the powers of clairvoyance,
One cannot benefit beings.

All the buddhas of the three times say that the distinctive cause of fully perfecting and bringing to their culmination the two accumulations whose natures are merit and wisdom is to develop the six clairvoyances, and bringing benefit to others as well depends upon the clairvoyances. Just as a bird whose wings are not fully fledged is unable to fly in the sky, as in that analogy, without the powers of the clairvoyances, one is unable to bring as vast a benefit to sentient beings as would benefit one's fortune. From the *Mother*:²⁰

Subhuti, for example, a bird without wings is unable to fly in the sky. Likewise, without using clairvoyance, bodhisattvas are unable to teach sentient beings dharma. As they have deviated from the path, they are unable bring sentient beings onto the path.²¹

With the clairvoyance of magic, one can go to buddha realms or whatever realms have beings to tame. By knowing others' minds, one comprehends their inclinations and intentions as they are. With the divine ear, one knows their languages. By knowing previous places, one comprehends their prior causes. With the divine eye, one knows what will happen in the future. Through the extinction of defilements, one teaches the paths to purification and liberation and thus makes them interested in the three vehicles, ripening and liberating them.

36.

The merits that those with clairvoyance
Attain in one day and night
Aren't gained in even a hundred lives
By those who do not have it.

Additionally, even if they have the equal supports of being bodhisattvas, the merit accumulated by a bodhisattva who has clairvoyance training for the period of one day and night is not gained in even a hundred lives by those who lack clairvoyance. This also illustrates the accumulation of wisdom.

37.
Those who wish to swiftly complete
The accumulations for perfect *bodhi*
Accomplish the clairvoyances
Through effort, not through laziness.

For that reason, those who want to swiftly perfect completely the two accumulations, the causes for achieving perfect enlightenment, need to develop the method to do so, clairvoyance. The six clairvoyances are accomplished by making great efforts with intense diligence at their causes, not through falling under the power of laziness. Thus one must be diligent.

38.
Without achieving shamatha,
Clairvoyances will not occur.
Thus make repeated efforts to
Accomplish shamatha.

Well, what is its cause that one must make efforts toward? Without properly achieving shamatha that is imbued with pure pliancy, the distinctive clairvoyances produced by the power of meditation will not occur. Thus for that reason make repeated efforts at the nine methods of resting the mind in order to accomplish shamatha.

(2) *The actual manner of training in shamatha*

This has three points.

(a) *Relying on the requisites for shamatha*

39.

If the requisites for shamatha
Are lacking, one might meditate
Tenaciously for thousands of years
But never accomplish samadhi.

40ab

Thus maintain well the requisites
Taught in the *Requisites for Samadhi*.

Will diligence alone accomplish shamatha? you wonder. It will not. If the assembly of the causes or requisites shamatha is lacking, one might meditate tenaciously with great diligence for a long time, but one will not accomplish the samadhi of shamatha even in thousands of years. Thus if the requisites are lacking, shamatha will not be achieved. For that reason, maintain well and accomplish the elements taught in the *Tract on the Requisites for Samadhi*, *The Stages of the Listeners*, and so forth.²²

(b) *How to do shamatha meditation*

40cd

On any of the focuses,
Rest your mind on virtue.

One who maintains the assembly of causes for shamatha rests on the virtue of that which meditates one-pointedly without wandering anywhere else on any one of the focuses for meditation taught by the Buddha as they appear in the *Tshang thub Sutra* or the treatises.

(c) *The benefits of the meditation*

41ab

When yogis achieve shamatha,
They also gain clairvoyances.

When yogis who strive like the flow of a river toward samadhi achieve shamatha, because of being well-trained in that, not only do the clairvoyances arise, the wisdoms of nonthought are also achieved. As Atisha himself said:

To gain the power of clairvoyance
And produce the undefiled paths,
First develop shamatha.²³

iii. The training in prajna

This has two topics: (1) Teaching the training in insight by way of teaching the rationale for the union of means and prajna, and (2) How to train in insight.

(1) Teaching the training in insight by way of teaching the rationale for the union of means and prajna

This has three topics: (a) The reason it is necessary to train in the prajna of insight, (b) The reason it is necessary to train in unified means and prajna, and (c) An explanation of the actual unified path.

(a) The reason it is necessary to train in the prajna of insight

41cd
Without the training in transcendent prajna,
The obscurations cannot be removed.

42.
Thus, to abandon all the obscurations—
The cognitive along with the afflictive—
Meditate continually on the yogas
Of transcendent prajna with its means.

You might wonder whether it is enough to develop shamatha and the clairvoyances it leads to. Though the worldly dhyanas eliminate manifest afflictions, without the training or yoga of the transcendent prajna that realizes suchness, one cannot remove the seeds of either of the two

obscurations. The great master Chandragomī said:

Although forest fires of the dhyanas
May burn time and again many shrubs of faults,
If the deep roots of self view aren't pulled out,
They'll grow again as if moistened by rain.²⁴

For that reason, in order to entirely eliminate the afflictive obscurations of greed and so forth as well as the cognitive obscurations, the imprints of dualistic confusion, one must continually—at all times—meditate on the yoga of transcendent prajna that realizes suchness along with its means, generosity and so forth. As it says in the *Way of the Bodhisattva*:

Emptiness is the remedy for the darkness
Of the afflictive and cognitive obscurations.
Why would not those who wish to swiftly become
Omniscient meditate on it?²⁵

The first two lines teach that without the prajna that realizes suchness no affliction at all can be abandoned. Therefore the listeners and pratyekabuddhas also have a realization of subtle emptiness. The latter four do not discriminate between the views of the greater or Foundation vehicles and teach that those who go on the Great vehicle must train in prajna that is imbued with vast means, it is said.

(b) The reason it is necessary to train in unified means and prajna

43.
Prajna without the skillful means
And means that lack the prajna
Are bondage, it is said, and thus
Don't discard either one.

In this way, one will not achieve buddhahood either with prajna only without means or with means alone without prajna. Thus individuals who seek perfect enlightenment must train in the path of unified means and prajna. This is because the Bhagavan said in *The Sutra Taught by Noble*

Vimalakīrti, “Prajna without means is bondage... Means without prajna is bondage.”²⁶ Thus one should not discard or cast aside either one of them.

(c) An explanation of the actual unified path

This has two topics: (i) Overview, and (ii) Detailed explanation.

(i) Overview

44.
To eliminate any doubts about
What prajna is and what means are,
I'll clarify the difference
Between skillful means and prajna.

What are each of their respective essences? you wonder. In order to eliminate any lack of comprehension, misapprehensions, and doubts about what prajna is and what means are, I shall clarify properly and without mistake or ambiguity the individual distinctions or differences between the characteristics of skillful means and prajna, which might seem to overlap.

(ii) Detailed explanation

This has three points.

A. Identifying means

45.
Apart from the transcendent prajna,
All of the virtuous qualities
Such as transcendent generosity
Are means, explained the Victor.

Apart from—that is, setting aside—transcendent prajna, all of the positive, virtuous qualities other than that, such as transcendent generosity imbued with bodhichitta and so forth, are explained by the victors of the three times to be included in the category of means.

B. The necessity for cultivating them

46.

Those beings who meditate on prajna
Swiftly achieve enlightenment
By cultivating means, not just
By meditating on selflessness.

By force of cultivating extremely stably the means from impermanence and karma and result through generosity and so forth, those bodhisattvas who focus on any outer or inner thing and meditate on the prajna that cuts the focus that apprehends attributes have extremely strong power to eliminate the obscurations. Therefore they will swiftly achieve unexcelled enlightenment. Unexcelled enlightenment is not achieved by ignoring the aspect of means and solely meditating on selflessness.

C. Identifying prajna

47.

Prajna is taught to be the knowing
Of inherent emptiness
That realizes the aggregates,
Elements, and sense bases don't arise.

The five aggregates, eighteen elements, and twelve sense bases are the thirty five dharmas that are the subject or focus. The predicate or aspect to ascertain in relation to them is to realize and know that they, by nature, have no arising. The primary cause for wandering in samsara is fixating on things as they appear as being true. Among fixations, holding that things inherently arise is itself the support for other attachments to reality, so it must be stopped. In order to do that, one must realize that by nature there is no arising. In this way, it is not as if what previously was something later becomes nothing. They have been empty from the very beginning. Thus one realizes that all phenomena by nature have no arising, and knowing that they are inherently emptiness is, between means and prajna, universally taught to be prajna. It is also the primary training in prajna.

(2) How to train in insight

This has two topics: (a) Extensive explanation, and (b) Summary.

(a) Extensive explanation

This has three topics: (i) Approaching the elements of insight, (ii) The method for meditating on insight, and (iii) The results of meditating on insight.

(i) Approaching the elements of insight

This has two topics: A. The prajna born of listening that depends upon logic, and B. The prajna of listening that depends upon scripture.

A. The prajna born of listening that depends upon logic

This has three points.

1. Analyzing the result: refuting that the existent or the nonexistent could arise

48.

It is not logical for the existent

To arise, nor for the nonexistent

Such as sky flowers. Both faults would apply,

So that which is both has no arising either.

Above it is taught that the mind that analyzes the inherent lack of arising is prajna, but realists say that is not tenable because things are proven in perception to arise and perish by their nature. Well then, if a shoot arises by its nature, at the time of the cause is it existent, nonexistent, both, or neither? To analyze these in turn, in the first case, for a seedling, the subject, it is not logical that something that exists at the time of the cause should arise, because if its existence is established, there is no need for it to arise. If things that have already been established arise, arising would be an infinite regress.

In the second case, it is also not logical that something that does not exist at the time of the cause should arise by nature, because the power of the cause may be as large as a mountain but it could not produce a seedling that

inherently exists, like for example a sky flower. If it is nonexistent at the time of the cause, it is not necessarily nonexistent in general, but if something inherently established is nonexistent at the time of the cause, it must be nonexistent in all instances, according to the logic taught in the following lines:

“It was before but now is not,”

It follows that is nihilism.²⁷

In the third case, both of the previously explained faults would consequentially apply. It is not logical that what is both existent and nonexistent at the time of the cause should occur of its own nature.

The fourth case is also not tenable: Such a third category of things that is neither existent nor nonexistent at the time of its cause is impossible.

In this way, the seedling, the subject, does not have any inherent arising, because the existent, the nonexistent, both, and neither do not inherently arise. Thus the object of prajna is logically proven to have no arising. From the *Seventy Verses on Emptiness*:

Since the existent exists, it does not arise.

Since the nonexistent does not exist, it does not arise.

Since the qualities are incompatible, it is not both.

Since there is no arising, it does not persist or perish.²⁸

2. Analyzing the cause: the vajra splinter argument

49.

Things do not arise from themselves,

Nor from another, nor from both,

Nor without cause, and for that reason

Inherently they have no nature.

Internal and external things, the subject, do not arise from themselves, because if that were so, arising would be pointless and an infinite regress. The refutation “If causes and results were the same, / The produced and the producer would be the same”²⁹ would also apply.

Nor do things arise from something that is inherently other, because if something is inherently other, there would be no relationship between that which benefits and that which is benefitted. If that were so, everything would arise from anything, and it would be refuted by the logic “If causes and results were other, / Causes and non-causes would be comparable.”³⁰

This also is essentially the logic of being neither single nor multiple, because refuting arising from a self disproves being single, and refuting arising from other disproves that they are inherently different.

They do not arise from both self and other, because arising from self and other have each been refuted. They do not arise without cause either, because it would be pointless for worldly people to do farm work for the sake of harvesting its fruits. It is also because the refutation “Since that which lacks a cause does not depend on another, / It would always exist or never exist”³¹ is relevant here.

In this way, arising from any of the four alternatives is untenable. For that reason, things inherently do not have any nature.

3. Analyzing the essence: the reason of being neither single nor multiple

50.

Or else when analyzing whether
All dharmas are single or multiple,
No essence is observed and thus
They're ascertained to have no nature.

Or else, there is another logic in addition the previous explanations. When analyzing all outer and inner phenomena, the subject, as to whether they are an inherently established single or a similarly established multiple, not even a speck of an essence established in relation to the object is observed. Thus they are ascertained not to be inherently established like, for example, a reflection in a mirror.

B. The prajna of listening that depends upon scripture

51.

The logics in the *Seventy Verses*,
Root Middle Way, and other texts
Explain how it's established that
The nature of all things is emptiness.

52.

Because this text would be too long,
I've not elaborated here.
But for the sake of meditation
I've merely taught the tenets they prove.

In order to truly develop certainty in profound emptiness, intelligent people will study in depth explanations that establish that the nature of things or the way things are is primordially emptiness from such texts as *The Compendium of the Sutras*, which proves it through citations on the definitive meaning of emptiness; the logics from *The Seventy Verses on Emptiness*, which establish it through reasoning; the collections of logic such as *The Root Verses of the Middle Way*, which proves profound emptiness by way of innumerable reasonings; and especially the texts by Nagarjuna's supreme interpreters, Bhavaviveka, Chandrakirti, and Aryadeva. They will thus gain a decisive understanding of the view.

Why are those extensive citations and logics not presented here? you ask. Because I feared that this text would become far too long if they were presented here, I have not elaborated on them here. However, I have explained very concisely a few of the tenets proven by scripture and logic here for the sake of meditation on selflessness.

According to the interpretation that the line "The logics in the *Seventy Verses*" teaches the logic of great interdependence, the lines "Those who strive in interdependence / Are inherently nonexistent" from *The Noble Sutra Requested by Sāgaramati* clearly refute inherent existence by the reason of interdependence. It is also clearly explained in the *Sutra Requested by Anavatapta*:

That which arose from conditions has not arisen.

It has no nature of arising.

That which depends on conditions is empty.

Those who know emptiness are careful.³²

The meaning of saying “has not arisen” in the first line is explained in the second line as there is no nature of that arising. Thus the refutation of arising is combined with the distinction of what is negated. The third line teaches that the meaning of empty is that which depends upon the interdependence of assembled conditions. Being empty of inherent establishment is the meaning of interdependence, but in the mere appearance whose mere arising has been negated, it is not empty of performing a function.

The lines “That which is interdependent / Is inherently pacified”³³ from the *Root Verses of the Middle Way* teach that by the reason of being interdependent, things are pacified or empty of inherent existence. Such logics of interdependence are highly lauded, as in *The Sutra Requested by Anavatapta*, where it says, “The wise realize interdependent dharmas / And do not depend on extreme views.” By realizing interdependence as it is, one does not depend upon extreme views. This is the unexcelled distinction of the great master Nagarjuna and his followers.

There are primarily two impediments to or sidetracks from the pure view: the view of projection—the eternalist view whose focus is the clinging to reality that holds phenomena to be real—and the view of denial—the nihilistic view with which there is no way to instill in oneself recognition of cause, effect, and interdependence and thus there is no identifying what is or is not. When inherent existence is refuted through reasons that instill certainty that from such-and-such cause and conditions such-and-such results occur, these two are discarded in their entirety. Ascertaining the meaning of the reason refutes the nihilistic view and ascertaining the meaning of the assertion refutes the eternalist view.

Therefore external things such as seedlings and so forth and internal things such as formations and so forth arise in stages in dependence upon a

seed and so forth or ignorance and so forth. If that is so, it is not tenable that they could be established by their own characteristics: If they were inherently established, they would have to be established as an autonomous nature that has control over itself, but that is contradictory of being dependent upon conditions. Through this, one can know that since individuals, jugs, and so forth are designations based upon their elements, so they have no inherent existence. If something arises in dependence or is designated in dependence, it is not inherently established as the same as that on which it depends. If it were the same, all agents and recipients of actions would be the same. The two are also not inherently established as other. If they were, the relation between could then be refuted, which is contradictory of depending on something. The *Root Verses* say:

That which arises in dependence
On something is not the same as it,
Nor is it other. Therefore this
Is neither destroyed nor permanent.³⁴

Thus after instilling certainty in emptiness that is empty of all focuses that apprehend attributes, the relation of action and result is not discarded, so adopting what should be done and rejecting what should not is highly praised. From the *Commentary on Bodhichitta*:

Knowing this emptiness of all dharmas
And relying on cause and effect—
This is more wondrous than a wonder,
More miraculous than a miracle.

For this to occur, one needs to distinguish between inherent existence and mere existence and between nonexistence by its own characteristics and nonexistence. According to the *Autocommentary on Entering the Middle Way*:

Just as one knows the presentation of the cause and effect of a reflection, which does not inherently exist, any wise person who views form, feelings and so forth, which do not exist separate from cause and effect, as mere existence creates certainty in having a nature. Thus one might observe them as existing, but by nature there is no arising.³⁵

If one does not distinguish these, all things that exist would inherently exist and all that does not inherently exist would become nothing at all, so one would not transcend the extremes of exaggeration or denial, he said. Therefore because they do not exist inherently, one is liberated from all extremes of existence, but because that itself can be presented as cause and result that lack a nature, one is liberated from all extremes of nonexistence.

In brief, holding phenomena to be true and holding them to be not established and not existent are falling into the extremes of eternalism and nihilism that are the opposite of the true meaning. Holding that even though phenomena do not exist ultimately, karma and result and so forth do exist conventionally is not an extreme view, because that object abides as mere appearance as it is apprehended. From the *Seventy Verses on Emptiness*:

“Dependent on this, that occurs” —
This way of the world does not cease.³⁶

(ii) *The method for meditating on insight*

53.
Therefore the natures of all dharmas
Cannot be not observed and thus
Meditating on selflessness
Is meditating on prajna.

54.
Just as prajna sees no nature
Of any phenomenon at all,
Meditate with the logics taught
On prajna itself, free of thought.

As all phenomena included in the aggregates, elements, and sense bases have been determined to lack truth, therefore if the natures of all remaining individuals or dharmas such as the aggregates and so forth were to exist, one should find them when looking for them with scripture and reasoning. But instead not even a speck is observed, so analyzing logically that “Individuals and phenomena have no inherently existing self” and meditating on that is itself meditating on transcendent prajna. From the *Middle Stages of Meditation*:

When one analyzes the essence of all things with prajna, because they are unobservable, one does dhyana. For that reason, this is called the dhyana of supreme prajna.³⁷

You might wonder how does one discard clinging to that very prajna that realizes this. Just as when analyzing individuals and phenomena with discriminating prajna no truly established nature of any phenomena at all is seen, when you analyze prajna itself with logic, there is nothing inherently established as true. Because it is free of a true single or true multiple, the perceiving subject is thus nonarising. Resting in the realization of that without thought is recognized as the cause of thought-free wisdom, so meditate on that.

(iii) The results of meditating on insight

This has two points.

A. The actual meaning

55.
The character of this existence,
Born from thought, is thought.
Therefore abandoning all thought
Is the supreme nirvana.

In its character, samsara—the three realms of existence that are born from thoughts that cling to truth and have them as their roots—is entirely a projection of thought. For that reason, abandoning all thoughts along with

their imprints in their entirety is the supreme liberation of nonabiding nirvana, the accomplishment of all benefits for oneself and others.

B. Proving this scripturally

65.

Accordingly, the Bhagavan has also said:

“Thought—the great ignorance—makes us
Fall into the ocean of samsara.
Resting in thought-free samadhi,
Nonthought is clear as the sky.”

66.

From *The Dharani of Entering Nonthought* as well:

“When the victors’ children, without thought,
Contemplate True Dharma,
They transcend thoughts so hard to escape
And eventually achieve nonthought.”

What is the source for saying that samsara arises from thought and that meditating on selflessness can eliminate that? you wonder. The Bhagavan said in the *Samputa Tantra*³⁸ that these thoughts that cling to reality are called “the great ignorance that is the root of existence,” because they are what make us fall into the bottomless, limitless ocean of samsara. As an antidote for thoughts that cling to truth, logically analyze the meaning of selflessness. When you achieve certainty, at the end of analysis dwell in the thought-free samadhi that has no thoughts and cultivate it. When the cultivation comes to its culmination, the nonconceptual nature of the mind will be seen clearly and directly, just like the autumn sky that is free of clouds. As it is said here:

Thought—the great ignorance—makes us
Fall into the ocean of samsara.
Resting in thought-free samadhi,
Nonthought is clear as the sky.

Additionally, according to *The Noble Dharāṇi of Entering Nonthought*, in this profound true Mahayana dharma, what is contrary to the attention of predication is thought-free samadhi. When the victors' offspring who already have the prajna of listening and contemplating have contemplated that and become habituated to it, they transcend the web of predicating thought that is so difficult to escape, eventually achieving thought-free wisdom. Thus it says:

When the victors' children, without thought,
Contemplate the True Dharma,
They transcend thoughts so hard to escape
And eventually achieve nonthought.³⁹

This is proven by scriptures from both the sutras and the tantras.

(b) Summary

58.
Once you are certain from the scriptures
And logic that all phenomena
Have no arising and no nature,
Meditate without thoughts.

Thus from the scriptures of the definitive meaning and the collections of stainless logic, you will become certain that individuals and all phenomena included in the aggregates and so forth are in truth non-arising or lack a nature of arising, and you will eliminate misconceptions. Then meditate one-pointedly on the meaning of how they are without any predicating thoughts. As it is said: After listening, make accomplishment the essence. You'll easily be liberated from the fortress of birth.⁴⁰

(ii) The presentation of the result

59.

Thus as you meditate on suchness,
Warmth and so forth are gained in turn.
Then you'll achieve the Truly Joyous—
It won't be long till buddhahood.

Thus after going for the common refuge, training your mind well in the paths of the lesser and middling persons, generating aspirational and engaged bodhichitta, and meditating on shamatha and the suchness of insight conjoined with vast means, you will progress well through the lesser, medium, and greater paths of accumulation and gradually gain warmth and so forth, the four precursors to clear realization.⁴¹ Then you will achieve the temporary results of the first level Truly Joyous, the second level Stainless, and so forth up to the vajra-like samadhi on the tenth level. From then it will not be a long time—it will be soon—before you attain the ultimate result, the great enlightenment of buddhahood, the state of the three kayas and five wisdoms. Then the activity that ripens and liberates all the infinite fortunate beings will occur spontaneously and continuously as long as there is samsara. As it is said:

Likewise as long as there is samsara,
Activity will be unceasing, we assert.

(B) A brief teaching on how to engage in mantra

This has three topics: (a) Teaching the necessity for receiving an empowerment to enter the Vajrayana, (b) How differences in the support determine whether or not it is appropriate to receive the two higher empowerments, and (c) Examining whether it is appropriate to listen to or teach the tantras if one has not received the two higher empowerments.

(a) Teaching the necessity for receiving an empowerment to enter the Vajrayana.

This has three points.

(i). Individuals who are supports

60.

If you wish to easily perfect
The accumulations for enlightenment
Through pacifying, enriching, and the other
Activities achieved from mantra's power

61.

And through the power of the eight great *siddhis*
Of accomplishing the fine vase and so forth—
If you wish to practice the secret mantra
Taught in the action, conduct, and other tantras—

One can perfect one's aims through by practicing the six transcendences and four means of nurturing of the vehicle of the transcendences, but what is the support needed to progress through the paths and levels of the Vajrayana? It is achieved through the power of reciting mantra itself. Having the wish to easily perfect by an easy and swift path the accumulations for one's own great enlightenment and to accomplish all benefits for others through the four activities of pacifying, enriching, and so forth as well as through the power of accomplishing the fine vase which provides all that is desired and the eight great *siddhis*⁴²; and having the wish to properly practice all the conducts of the secret mantra as taught in the action, conduct, and other classes of tantra, is known as the appropriate support for the secret mantra.

(i). Bestowing empowerments on them

62.

Then to receive the empowerment
Of the vajra master, please the guru
With service and offerings of wealth
As well as by carrying out commands.

63ab

When a guru who is pleased bestows
The full empowerment of the master,

When individuals who are supports for the path of the Vajrayana wish to enter the secret mantra, they must please a guru who is qualified and great. The purpose is to receive the vajra master empowerment. This also illustrates the three supreme higher empowerments. The manner in which to do so is through service with body and speech; material offerings such as wealth, robes, food and drink, transportation of their things, and so forth just as they wish; and by agreeing to their commands and carrying them out properly. You should please the great guru with all the things of your body, speech, and mind. As it is said:

Serve the spiritual friend with respect,
Goods, service, and accomplishment.

When the guru has been pleased, the student supplicates for the empowerment. Through the vajra master empowerment including the final supports and initiations, the disciples themselves are made appropriate vessels for the secret mantra.

(i). Teaching the greatness of empowerment

63cd
Your misdeeds will all be purified;
You'll have the fortune to gain the siddhis.

Being bestowed in full the four empowerments as described above will purify all your misdeeds and obscurations of the three gates along with their imprints, and you, the student, will then have the fortune to gain all the ordinary and supreme siddhis.

(b) How differences in the support determine whether or not it is appropriate to receive the two higher empowerments

64.
The great tantra of the primordial buddha
Emphatically prohibits it,
So the celibate should never take
The secret and prajna empowerments.

Should all individuals who want the accomplishments take those empowerments? you wonder. In the great root tantra of the primordial buddha Kalachakra, the Bhagavan emphatically made a strong prohibition, and so anyone who dwells in the discipline of a celibate lay practitioner or any of the five categories of monastics should not bestow the secret or prajna empowerments upon anyone else, nor should they actually take them themselves.

65.

If those who practice celibacy
Had those empowerments
And did what is prohibited,
The vows of discipline would be broken

66.

And the practitioners would incur
A downfall that is a defeat.
They'd fall into the lower realms—
Accomplishment would elude them.

What is the problem he saw that he forbade those two empowerments for the celibate and so forth? If those individuals were to actually have or take those two empowerments, those who practice the discipline of celibacy and the vows of going forth would do what the Teacher prohibited. For that reason, the austerity of celibacy and the vows of going forth would be broken. Those who practice discipline would incur a defeat or a root downfall similar to a defeat. Those individuals impaired by such downfalls would definitely fall into the three lower realms, so there would never be any time when they could achieve the accomplishments. As Atisha himself said:

Those on the liberating path of celibacy should not bestow the secret and prajna wisdom empowerments, and disciples should not take them either. That would destroy chaste conduct and make the Buddha's teachings disappear, so the master and disciples would both without any doubt go to the hells.⁴³

(c) Examining whether it is appropriate to listen to or teach the tantras if one has not received the two higher empowerments

67.

For those who've received the master empowerment
Or who have known suchness, there's no fault
In teaching or listening to any tantra,
Performing a fire puja, offering, or so forth.

If it is not appropriate for the celibate to actually take those two empowerments, does that mean they have no fortune for the conduct of secret mantra? you ask. There is no fault. In all four classes of action tantra and so forth, there is no fault for the individuals who have received the vajra master empowerment including permissions or who have known the ten suchnesses to listen as students, teach as masters, or perform fire pujas, offerings, consecrations, empowerments, and so forth.

3. THE CAUSE FOR WRITING THIS TEXT

68.

Upon the supplication of Jangchup Ö,
I, the Elder Dipaṅkara Śrī,
Explained in brief the path of enlightenment
As I've seen taught in sutras and other Dharma.

As he is the crown jewel of all eighteen schools and as he has held the pure vows of full ordination continually for over thirty years, he is the great elder⁴⁴ Dipaṅkara Śrī. Jangchup Ö of the royal lineage, who had undertaken the burden of Tibetan Buddhism, supplicated him for the sake of the teachings in general to write this text that is a chariot of the Great vehicle.

Because of this, he has written this explanation of the Mahayana path that leads from the levels of a beginner to supreme enlightenment as he has seen it explained in the sutras and other True Dharma, including the tantras and treatises of pith instructions. As it is said:

This life is short; there are many things to know;
We do not know how long this life will last.
So like a swan who takes the milk from water,
It is good to pursue what you want.

He put aside the elaborations of long refutations and proofs and wrote this in a few concise words as an aid for accomplishing the entire practice of those who seek omniscience.

CONCLUDING POINTS

This has two points.

1. WHO WROTE THIS

This concludes The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment written by the great master Dipaṅkara Śrī Jñāna.

This completes the text *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* written for the sake of fortunate students beyond number with great compassion by him who is the crown jewel the five hundred,⁴⁵ the great learned master Dipaṅkara Śrī Jñāna.

2. WHO TRANSLATED THIS

It was translated and finalized by the great Indian abbot himself and the great translator and editor Geway Lodrö. This Dharma was written in the Tholing Temple in Zhang Zhung.

The Indian abbot Dipaṅkara Śrī Jñāna and the Tibetan translator, the eye of the world,⁴⁶ the bhikshu Geway Lodrö translated it from the Indian language into Tibetan, discussed the meaning of the words, and engaged in explaining and listening.

This fine text that contains the entire teachings
Is the route all victors of the ten directions followed with ease,
The single path traversed by the bodhisattvas.
You who want freedom, take it as heart nourishment.

May all beings be taken in by a spiritual friend
And enter this excellent pure path.
May they rouse bodhichitta; may it be stable and increase;
And may they perfect the ocean of excellent conduct.

Through the bodhichitta of glorious Dipaṅkara
And the power of aspiration, may we and others perfect without hardship
The stages of the path to enlightenment in our beings.
May we spontaneously accomplish the two benefits in this life.

Saying “It would be good if you provide such a service of commentarial notes to this famous great text,” the omniscient venerable guru gave an order out of great compassion. Accordingly studying the Sage’s teachings without bias and holding just a few signs of a child of the victors, Lodrö Thaye extracted and arranged the essence of the words of great spiritual friends. May virtue flourish.

Translated at the request of Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche by David Karma Choephel at Namö Buddha, Nepal, in the summer of 2012. Revised September, 2017.

1 Those who are entering or abiding on the results of stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner, and arhat. These are the results attained through the vehicle of the listeners.

2 Skt. *pratyekabuddha*

3 This is an explanation of the Sanskrit word for humans, *mānuṣa*, which refers to intelligence.

4 The higher states are rebirth in the realms of gods and humans, and true excellence is liberation (nirvana) and omniscience.

5 The creation and completion stages.

6 Chapter 1, verse 9. Tengyur *dBu ma la pa*, 2a.

7 Ch. 1, v. 24. Tengyur *dBu ma la pa*, 3a.

8 Though attributed here to Āryadeva, it is actually from Ācarya Mahāpaṇḍita Bhavya's *The Lamp of the Precious Middle Way*, Tengyur *dbu ma tsha pa*, 260b.

9 From the *Mahayana Treatise of the Supreme Continuum*. Tengyur, *Sems tsam phi pa*, 69b.

10 The five are the speed of an oxcart, the speed of an elephant cart, the speed of the sun and moon, the speed of the listeners' miracles, and the speed of the sugatas' miracles. They are mentioned in *The Compendium of the Sutras* by Nagarjuna (Tengyur *ki pa*, 158b-159a).

11 Tengyur, *sems tsam phi pa*, 9a.

12 Tengyur, *sems tsam phi pa*, folio 3b. According to the commentary by Vasubandhu, "truly wanting that" refers to wanting buddhahood, and "the promise" refers to the commitment to go for refuge. (Tengyur *sems tsam phi pa*, 136b)

13 The seven factors are knowing that beings have been your mothers, remembering their kindness, gratitude, loving-kindness, great compassion, a pure attitude, and bodhichitta.

14 Kangyur, *dkon brtsegs ca pa*, 227b.

15 Three times by day and three by night.

16 By Vasubandhu. Tengyur *Skyes rabs dang sprin yig skor ge pa*, 173b.

17 Atisha lists the two sets of four in his autocommentary. The four things that make bodhichitta wane are to deceive your khenpo, master, guru, or patron; to make someone regret what should not be regretted; to utter proclamations about an individual who has properly entered the Great vehicle that are not praise, that are unpleasant, or that should not be said; and to act with deceit and pretense toward others. The four things that make bodhichitta not wane are to never speak untruthful words at the cost of your life or even as a joke; to always be present before sentient beings with pure motivation and free of pretense and deceit; to think of all bodhisattvas as the Teacher and to declare their praises in the four directions; and

so that they do not follow a provisional vehicle, to bring all beings who can be ripened to grasp complete and perfect enlightenment. (Tengyur, *dBu ma khi pa*, 256a–b)

18 Though I have been unable to locate *The Lamp of the Moon*, this quote does appear in the *Stainless Light Commentary* on the Kalachakra Tantra (Kangyur, *dri med 'od*, 4b), and in his ordination rituals Jamgön Kongtrul also notes that it is from the mantra vehicle.

19 As described in *The Bodhisattva Levels*, “requesting the buddhas to know” means to ask the buddhas and great bodhisattvas of the ten directions to know that you have taken the vow. “Entering the vision of wisdom” means that they have understood and known that you have taken the vow. “Not rashly publicizing the vow” means that you should not tell people who would lose faith or otherwise be harmed by knowing. (Tengyur *Sems tsam wi pa*, pp. 84–85.)

20 *The Prajñāparāmita Sutra in 18,000 Lines*.

21 Kangyur *khri brgyad stong pa ga*, 138a.

22 The Tract on the *Requisites for Samadhi* by Acharya Jangchup Sangpo lists nine things that are necessary for developing shamatha meditation. These include the things to give up, the prerequisites, what must be stopped, ceasing torments, revulsion, remembering the qualities, what to be diligent in, what to strive at, and the methods for resting. These are respectively (1) giving up the acts of the maras, (2) study, (3) teaching others, (4) putting excessive effort into study, (5) feeling revulsion for sensory pleasures and acclaim, (6) remembering the benefits of meditation for this and future lives, (7) being diligent about developing shamatha, (8) being diligent about insight, and (9) meditative techniques learned directly from a lama.

23 From *The Means to Accomplish the Mahayana Path Compiled in Letters*. Tengyur, *dbu ma khi pa*, p. 302a.

24 In the Praise of Instruction. *Tengyur stod tsogs ka pa*, 205b.

25 Tengyur *dbu ma la pa*, 33a.

26 Kangyur, *mdo sde ma pa*, 215a.

27 From the *Root Verses of the Middle Way*. Tengyur tsa pa, folio 9a.

28 Tengyur tsa pa, folio 110b.

29 From the *Root Verses of the Middle Way*. Tengyur *dBu ma tsa pa*, folio 12a.

30 Ibid.

31 From the *Commentary on the Seventy Verses on Emptiness*. Tengyur *dBu ma ya pa*, 346b.

32 Kangyur *mDo sde pha pa*, pp. 258–59.

33 Tengyur *dBu ma tsa pa*, folio 5a.

34 Tengyur tsa pa, 11a.

35 Tengyur *dBu ma 'a pa*, 259b.

36 Tengyur *dBu ma tsa pa*, 26b.

37 Tengyur *dbu ma ki pa*, 50a.

38 Kangyur *rGyud 'bum ga pa*, 357a. This verse also appears in the *Śrī Jñānavajra Samuccaya* (Kangyur *rGyud 'bum ca pa*, 326b) and the *Māyājāla Mahātantrarāja Nāma* (Kangyur *rGyud 'bum ja pa*, 98b).

39 Kangyur *mDo sde pa*, 6a.

40 From the *Garland of Jataka Tales*. Tengyur *skye rabs hu*, 122a.

41 The precursors to clear realization are the four stages of the path of joining.

42 The eight common siddhis of the eye potion, fleet-footedness, the sword, going underground, the pill, the celestial realm, invisibility, and the elixir of youth.

43 Tengyur *dBu ma ki pa*, 116a.

44 Great elder (*mahāthera*) is a title given to those who have held the bhikshu vows for over twenty years.

45 Atisha is considered one of the five hundred great masters from the Noble Land of India.

46 *Eye of the world* is an explanation of the etymology of the Tibetan word for translator, *lots' a ba*.

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