The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path

Lamrim bshus-don

of the Gradual Path

The Abbreviated Points

translated by Alex Berzin
by Lama Tsong Khapa
I prostrate before you, foremost of the Shakya Clan.
Your body is born from a host of positive actions and splendid attainments,
your speech grants the wishes of limitless beings.
Your mind sees all knowables just as they are.

I prostrate before you, Maitreya and Manjushri,
Supreme spiritual sons of this peerless teacher.
Accepting the mantle (to enact) the full set of triumphant ones' deeds,
you display emanations in countless worlds.

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

In order to accustom my mind (to these stages of the path)
and also to benefit others of good fortune,
I have explained here in easily understandable words
the complete path that is pleasing to the buddhas.
I pray that, by this constructive act,
may all limited beings never be parted from this pure and excellent path.
If you would also seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that.
If you would also seek liberation,

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

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

The stages of the path to enlightenment have passed down intact
Through successive generations from Nagarjuna and Asanga,
The crown jewels of all erudite masters of the Southern Continent,
And the banner of whose fame flies gloriously
above the wandering masses.
As (following the stages) can fulfill, without an exception,
The desired spiritual aims of the nine types of rebirth,
They constitute a power-granting king of precious instruction.
Because they gather within them the streams of myriad excellent classics,
They comprise a veritable ocean
of all-round perfect, correct explanation.
They comprise a veritable ocean
Because they gather within them the means of universal exaltedclassic,
They constitute a powerful-finding king of precious instruction.
As (following the stages) can fulfill, without an exception,

You understand all Buddha's teachings with no contradictions.
The scriptural pronouncements, without an exception,
Dawn on your mind as personal guidelines.
You easily discover the Triumphant One's intended meanings.
They protect you from the abyss of the great misdeed
(forsaking the Dharma).

Please cultivate yourself in the same way.
They comprised a veritable ocean
If you too would seek liberation,
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Because of these benefits, what scrutinizing persons among the erudite masters of India and Tibet will not have their minds enraptured by the stages of the path of three spiritual scopes, the supreme instructions to which many fortunate ones have relied upon fully. Although positive potential accrues from reciting or hearing even once Atisha’s manner of text that fully encompasses the essential points of all scriptural pronouncements, even greater waves of massive benefit, for certain, build up from actually teaching or studying the sacred Dharma contained within. Therefore, consider the points for doing this properly.

A healthy relation, worked on with effort in thought and action, with a holy spiritual mentor who indicates the path is the root most appropriate for the dependent arising of the hugest networks of potential and awareness for this and future lives. Seeing this, then having taken the safe direction of refuge, please your mentors by offering practice that accords with their enlightening words, which you would not forsake even at the cost of your life. The ever-vigilant lama (Tsongkhapa) has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

This working basis of a human life with eight respites is far more precious than a wish-granting gem. A rebirth like this is gained perhaps only once. Hard to acquire and easily lost, it passes in a flash like lightning in the sky.

The ever-vigilant lama (Tsongkhapa) has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

Single-pointed constancy of mind, on its own, lacks the perception that is able to sever the root of samsara. Discriminating awareness, parted from a stilled and settled pathway of mind, cannot reverse disturbing emotions and attitudes, no matter how much it analytically discerns. But when the discriminating awareness that can be utterly decisive is mentally abiding on how everything exists, unwaveringly, with total stability, while also applying the individualizing inspection that analytically discerns voidness correctly — what need to mention that it actualizes absorbed concentration through habituation with single-pointedness of mind, it increasingly enhances that absorbed concentration.
Considering (your precious human life) in these ways
And realizing that (engaging in) any worldly activities
Is like trying to winnow (something meaningful from) chaff,
You must try to take the essence of life at all times, day and night.
The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that.

If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

After death, there is no assurance of avoiding
one of the worst rebirth forms.
Yet, it is certain that the Three Supreme Gems provide safe direction
away from any dread (of this fate).
For these reasons, be extremely steadfast in taking their safe direction
in life
And unrelenting in following their points for training.
(Performance success) further depends on considering well
Which types of impulsive behavior are noble or dark,
and what are their results,
Then living by adopting (the former) and avoiding (the latter).

The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,

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

The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that.
If you too would seek liberation,

Discriminating awareness is the eye for beholding profound (voidness),
the actual way (in which everything exists).
It is the pathway of mind for extracting
the root of compulsive existence.
It is the treasure of genius praised in all the scriptural pronouncements
as the root of cognitive experience.

If you too would seek liberation,
Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

If your entire mode of behavior takes on meaningful purpose,
And you bring whatever you start to its intended conclusion,
Realizing this, bodhisattvas exert great waves of positive enthusiasm,
Washing away all laziness.

The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that.
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Without working hard at pondering true problems and their drawbacks,
You will not properly gain keen interest in liberation (from them).
Without considering the stages whereby (true) origins of suffering
draw you into samsara,
You will not see the means for cutting the root of this vicious circle.
Therefore, relish knowing the factors that bind you to this wheel,
Exuding disgust, and becoming determined to leave such existence.

Developing and enhancing bodhichitta is the bedrock for the Supreme Vehicle's paths.
It is the basis and foundation for great waves of enlightening conduct.
Like an elixir for transmuting into gold, (it transfigures into enlightening features) all aspects of the two networks (of potentials and awareness).
It (builds up, day and night) a treasure of positive potential,
amassed from an endless array of constructive acts.

Total willingness to give is the wish-granting gem for fulfilling the hopes of wandering beings.
It is the sharpest weapon to sever the knot of stinginess.
It leads to bodhisattva conduct that enhances self-confidence and courage,
And is the basis for universal proclamation of your fame and repute.

Ethical discipline is the water to wash away the stains of misdeeds.
It is the ray of moonlight to cool the scorching heat of disturbing emotions.
By its power, you stand out amidst the nine kinds of beings, radiant like a Mount Meru.

Patience (not to become angry or upset) is the best adornment for those who hold power,
And the perfect ascetic practice for those tormented by disturbing emotions.
It is the high-soaring eagle as the enemy of the snake of hostility,
And the thickest armor against the sharp weapons of abusive words.

Realizing this, (the wise) accustom themselves,
in various ways and forms,
to (wearing) the padding of supreme patience.