

**JOURNEY**

INTO

**BUDDHAHOOD**



**The Five Paths**

and

**Ten Stages**

of

**Compassionate Beings**

Tempa Dukte Lama

Olmo Ling Publications  
Pittsburgh 2014

Olmo Ling Publications  
1101 Greenfield Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217  
[www.olmoling.org](http://www.olmoling.org)

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Printed in the United States of America

This edition printed on acid-free paper.

ISBN 13: 978-0-9835-4562-0

ISBN 10: 0-9835-4562-6

Library of Congress control number: 2013910632

Designed and typeset by James P. Brommer in 10.5/18 Caslon.

This book is dedicated to

**His Holiness the 33rd Menri Trizin Rinpoche**

and to

**His Eminence Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche**



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## Foreword

The complete liberation of unsurpassable Buddhahood is attained by following the five gradual paths and ten successive stages of a compassionate being. Therefore it is of great importance that we know and understand the profound teaching of the Five Paths and Ten Stages and its meaning in detail.

According to the Path of Renunciation it is impossible to attain complete awakening without following the gradual Five Paths and the Ten Stages. To follow the Paths and Stages, one must first know and understand the fivefold Path of Cyclic Existence, the path of the five poisons, as an obstacle to following the Paths and Stages. Besides, one has to put effort into cultivating a skillful means for renouncing the Path of Cyclic Existence. Because of the five afflictive poisons and the resulting karmic actions, all beings of the six realms go through continuous birth and transmigration from one realm to another. Thus, beings are bound within cyclic existence.

To enable one to know how the fivefold Path of Cyclic Existence or the five poisons can be renounced, this path is explained in detail within the teachings on the Paths and Stages. One has to follow the

Five Paths and Ten Stages as its antidote in order to renounce the Path of Cyclic Existence.

The teachings of the Five Paths and Ten Stages explain in great depths how one can cultivate the realization of this path within one's mind stream. Having realized the Five Paths and Ten Successive Stages, one gradually proceeds toward attaining complete Buddhahood. After describing how to cultivate the Path of Liberation, the teachings explain the ultimate fruition of the Paths and Stages in detail. This fruition is a complete awakening or the attainment of the three bodies of the Awakened One.

In this present book, *Journey into Buddhahood*, Tempa Lama Rinpoche has explained in great depth the teaching of the Five Paths and Ten Stages based on the *Sa Lam* books by rDro mGon bLo Dros rGyal mTshan and by other ancient great Bön lineage masters. Particularly, Tempa Lama has explained the teaching of the Paths and Stages and their application to everyday life in a way which is simple and easy to understand.

This book is the first time that the Bön teachings on the Paths and Stages of compassionate beings are available in English or any other Western language. At this time people in the West take a deep interest in the practice and teachings of Bön and Buddhism. For those people, this book is like the rain coming at the right time and place. This book will be of great benefit to all those aspiring beings. I rejoice and am grateful to Tempa Lama Rinpoche for writing this detailed book on the Paths and Stages of compassionate beings in English.

*His Eminence Menri Lupon  
Yangton Trinley Nyima Rinpoche  
Menri Monastery, India  
26th January, 2013*

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## Introduction

Tonpa Shenrab Miwo, the Awakened One, said that the Journey into Buddhahood begins with the path. Path means practice. The basis of our experience is the mind. The essence of practice is to understand that our mind is responsible for both suffering and freedom. Whether we experience happiness or suffering depends upon the way we think. This recognition motivates us to look for a path that not only offers temporary respite from suffering, but also enables us to completely free ourselves and all beings.

The Bön teachings offer three paths through which we carry the Journey into Buddhahood: the Path of Renunciation or *mDo*, the Path of Transformation or *sNgags*, and the Path of Self-Liberation or *Sems*. All three paths share the same objective, to attain ultimate liberation. Ultimate liberation means that the repetitive nature of suffering, the cyclic continuum of existence, is exhausted.

The practice and teachings in this book are based on the Path of Renunciation. The Path of Renunciation is comprised of three essential aspects: the base, path, and the fruit. The base has two aspects, relative truth and absolute truth. The absolute truth is the true nature of reality, which is that all phenomena lack inherent

existence. All entities, whether they are characterized by suffering or by freedom from suffering, arise from this base. They abide in it, and they dissolve into it. This empty nature of all entities, which is the absolute truth, is the fundamental base of the Path of Renunciation. Yet, the absolute truth is incomplete without the relative truth. These two aspects of the base are inseparable; they are like the two wings of a bird.

The relative truth is how things appear to us. It is that which arises, abides, and dissolves. The phenomena that appear to us are like the clouds that arise in, abide in, and dissolve into empty space. The relative truth is characterized by the Four Noble Truths. The First Noble Truth is the truth of suffering. This is the fruition of cyclic existence. On the Path of Renunciation we first need to recognize and understand suffering. The second step is to understand and accept the cause of suffering. Suffering arises from delusion together with unwholesome actions. This recognition is the Second Noble Truth. The Journey into Buddhahood begins with the understanding of suffering and its causes. Therefore this book begins with an explanation of the Path of Cyclic Existence and how it arises.

Through this understanding of suffering we enter the Path of Liberation called *Thar Lam*. This is the topic of the second chapter. ‘Thar’ means to be free and ‘Lam’ means path that leads to freedom. This path is a bridge toward the attainment of complete awakening. Freedom from suffering is the Third Noble Truth. The Path that leads to freedom from suffering is the Fourth Noble Truth.

In order to actualize this path, we need to have faith and we need to cultivate the mind of awakening. The mind of awakening is the vast motivation to free ourselves and all beings from suffering.

In addition we need to rely on a teacher who has knowledge of the Path of Liberation and will guide us through giving practice instructions, transmission, and empowerment of the practice. Through the help of the teacher we will gain the threefold wisdom. The first is wisdom based on hearing the teachings. Through contemplating on what we have heard, we gain the wisdom of contemplation. Finally, as we meditate on what we have contemplated, we gain the wisdom of meditation.

The threefold wisdom of hearing, contemplation, and meditation falls into two categories based on the individual view and practice. The first is the wisdom that realizes the selflessness of the self. This is the view and practice of the Lower Vehicle of the Path of Renunciation. The second is the wisdom that cognizes the lack of inherent existence of the self and all phenomena. This is the view and practice of the Greater Vehicle of the Path of Renunciation. Followers of the Lower Vehicle are devoted to liberating themselves, while followers of the Greater Vehicle include all beings into the field of their practice. They practice not only to liberate themselves, but to benefit all beings. This is called the Path of Compassionate Beings. If we want to liberate all beings, we need to have a vast open mind and heart and great skill, both in benefitting ourselves and in benefitting others.

Chapters three through seven explain the view, practice, and realization of the Path of Compassionate Beings. This Path consists of five paths: the Path of Accumulation, the Path of Application, the Path of Seeing, the Path of Meditation, and the Path of No More Learning or Buddhahood. The practices underlying these Five Paths are called the Thirty-Seven Aspects of Enlightenment.

On the Path of Accumulation, the aspiring compassionate being practices the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Endeavors, and the Four Absorptions. On the Path of Application, the aspiring compassionate being practices the Five Faculties and the Five Powers. On the Path of Seeing, the compassionate being practices the Seven Limbs of Enlightenment. On the Path of Meditation, the compassionate being practices the Noble Eightfold Path.

The teachings in this book draw upon four different sources. The first source is *Sa Lam*\* by rDro mGon bLo Dros rGyal mTshan, the eighth abbot of Yeru Wensaker Monastery (1198–1263). The second source is *Sa Lam* by mNyam Med She Rab rGyal mTshan, the first abbot of sMan Ri Monastery (1356–1415). The third source is *Theg Chen Sa Lam* by rGyal Tshab Rin Chen rGyal mTshan who became the second abbot of sMan Ri in 1415. The fourth source is *Phar Phyin* Volume I & II by Kun mKhyen Nyima bsTan 'dZin, the 23rd abbot of sMan Ri (1813–1862).

My sincere hope is that the reader will gain more insight into the Bön teachings and in particular into the view, practice, conduct, and meditation of the Path of Renunciation. My aspiration in writing this book is that it may be of benefit to all beings who aspire to undertake the Journey into Buddhahood.

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\* *Sa* means ground or stage and *Lam* means path. Hence, *Sa Lam* is the [Five] Paths and [Ten] Stages of Compassionate Beings.