



The Three Principal Aspects of the Path

(lam gtso rnam gsum)

by Je Tsongkhapa

Homage to all the Venerable Masters!

As this illuminates the essential meaning known by all the Victorious Ones, the path praised by all sublime bodhisattvas, and the entranceway for those fortunate ones that aspire towards liberation: allow me to explain this according to my capacity!

Those who are unattached to samsara's pleasures and who long to bring meaning to this precious human life, are fortunate ones., so please lend your attention by enthusiastically embracing the path that delights all Victors!

Without authentic renunciation, there exists no other method in this ocean of existence as well as the state of quiescence to pursue the fruit of true happiness. Since the embodied are bound by their unquenchable thirst for samsara, those who remain attached to this existence must first seek renunciation!

Growing accustomed to the fact that this difficult to acquire precious human rebirth is short lived, the pleasures of this life will be forsaken. By repeatedly considering the misery of samsara and the undeniable truth of cause and effect, the phenomena of future expectations will also be forsaken!

Once becoming familiar in these ways, when the yearning for ordinary happiness ceases to arise in the mind even momentarily, and the attitude of striving towards liberation both day and night is present, it is then that authentic renunciation will have been gained!

If this renunciation is not imbued with the purest of intentions, it alone will not be cause for the fully endowed bliss of unsurpassed awakening. That is why the learned will always cultivate the supreme bodhicitta!

Carried along by the torrential current of the four great rivers, restricted by the restraints of karma so difficult to reverse, and caught up in the iron net of self-grasping, beings are shrouded by the great darkness of ignorance!

All motherly beings born in this existence, are tormented life after life by the constant onset of the three types of suffering. Thinking of their plight the supreme bodhicitta will surely be cultivated!

If the prajna that realizes the fundamental nature is not present, even if one is familiar with renunciation and bodhicitta, the potential to sever the very root of this existence will be lacking. Hence the methods for realizing dependent origination must be engendered.

Whoever sees that the law of cause and effect concerning all phenomena of samsara and beyond is truly undecieving, and that all points of reference are undependable, is one who will have entered the path that pleases all the Buddhas!

As long as the understanding of infallible dependent arising and emptiness free from assertions are differentiated, the wisdom intent of the Sage [Shakyamuni] will yet to be understood. When the truth of dependent arising is appreciated concurrent with impartial [emptiness] and fixation upon true existence collapses, then the process of analyzing the view will have been complete.

Furthermore, once it is known that through appearances eternalism is dispelled and thru emptiness nihilism is clarified, then the nature of emptiness and the mode of [appearances] arising as cause and effect will have been acknowledged and extreme views will never rob the mind again.

In order to precisely realize the key point of these three crucial aspects of the path, O sons and daughters it is time to rely upon isolation and cultivate fortitude while swiftly pursuing this ultimate goal!

Thus the learned monk Lozang Dragpa gave this advice to the King of Tsakho, Ngawang Dragpa from Gyalrong.

Translated by Light of Berotsana

Light of Berotsana is pleased to offer our translation of this well-known teaching by the great master Je Tsongkhapa, an emanation of Manjushri. Respected by all lineages of Tibetan Buddhism this poetic presentation illuminates the teaching on non-dual emptiness and appearances as well as highlighting the three principles that lead to liberation namely, renunciation, altruism and the realization of emptiness. 12/01/2014