

“The Good-Goal Expression of Realizations: The Spiritual Autobiography of Lama Tsongkhapa” Teaching by Geshe Lotin

The link for the pdf of the text can be found by accessing the Deer Park Center website:

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and then clicking on [PDF of program booklet and teaching text given by His Holiness](#). The text appears on pages 25 through 37.

March 9, 2008

1. This life story of Lama Tsongkhapa is divided into three parts:
 - a. His study – listening or hearing
 - b. Understanding what he had heard
 - c. Practice of what he had heard

2. Lama Tsongkhapa was born in Amdo, Tibet where Kumbum Monastery now is. This area is called “Tsonye_--land of onions. It is a place of successful businesses and now is known Siling. He took his lay person vows and monk vows from his teacher Khendrup Rinchen Choeje.

3. The text begins with the word “OM.” This word symbolizes the unity of body, speech and mind. “Ah” = body, the “O” sound = speech, and the “M” sound = mind.4.

4. Verse One: Lama Tsongkhapa pays homage to Manjushri. Giving homage is the traditional way of starting a teaching. “Eye” is a metaphor referring to being near to achieving higher rebirth and also liberation. Manjushri is an enlightened being and Tsongkhapa is the human emanation of Manjushri.

5. Verse Two: A summary of this verse is don’t generate pride when you do something good.

6. Verse Three: This states the fact that Lama Tsongkhapa spent much effort in practice and dedicated his practice to the spread of the Dharma. This statement had a huge impact on Tibetan teachers and teachings since it contrasts with the Nyingma tradition. The Nyingma tradition typically says that you don’t need to study. You already have Buddha nature. You just need someone to introduce you to your nature. The layers of deception disappear when your guru introduces you to your innate nature. But this text says that study and practice are necessary to achieve enlightenment. You need to first know what the deceptions are in order to be able to recognize them and eliminate them. This is accomplished by learning
 - Listening
 - Practice
 - Meditation

Relying on a teacher is very important, but your own effort is necessary to realize yourself from negativities. If you are sick, you need to take medicine given to you by your doctor. Your efforts are the taking of the medicine. This is necessary to see your own Buddha nature.

In the famous debate between the Indian guru Kamalishila and the Chan teacher HaSung, the latter asserted that all you have to do to reach enlightenment is to keep your mind empty. It doesn't matter if a cloud is black or white—no matter the color, it still blocks the sun. However, Kamalshila refuted this and said that the conceptual mind is the foundation of enlightenment and the practitioner must transform it into a non-conceptual mind. In the first two paths-- Accumulation and Preparation—the conceptual mind is in operation. In the uninterrupted Path of Seeing, the mind transforms into the non-conceptual mind.

March 16, 2008

Fourth Verse: Lama Tsong Khapa emphasizes practice from the Sutra system. Without learning, you are in darkness. Darkness = ignorance. When you are in darkness you don't know what to adopt and what to avoid, so you need a lamp, a light. You need to start from scriptures and text. To reach the destination of enlightenment, you need preliminary studies.

The sequence of the learning process:

1. Extensive learning
2. Scriptural traditions
3. Endless practice

Then you dedicate all in order for the teachings to spread.

Thanks to the treatises of our great scholars – Najarguna, etc, and thanks to great masters such as Manjushri, we are able to train our minds and reach enlightenment.

In this eon, there will be 1,000 Buddhas and Maitreya will be the 5th Buddha. Buddhas appear as ordinary persons, but were already in a state of enlightenment before actually being born.

Maitreya Buddha was one of the bodhisattvas who achieve 10 bumies during the time of Buddha. His 8 close disciples included Manjushri and Maitreya. Asanga was born 600 years later and stayed in solitary retreat to have a vision of Maitreya Buddhas. After 12 years, he had this vision and achieved miraculous powers. He went to Tushita Heaven where Maitreya taught him the 12 Works of Maitreya.

Indian masters:

1. Nagajuna
2. Aryadeva
3. Asanga
4. Vasubandhu
5. Dignaga
6. Dharmakirti
(Two excellences:)
7. Gunaprabha

8. Shakyaprabha

The six middle way treatises by Nagarjuna:

1. The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way
2. Refutation of Arguments
3. Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness
4. Sixty Stanzas on Reasoning
5. Fine Investigation and Discernment
6. The Jewel Garland

Two direct disciples of the Nagarjuna and their major texts:

1. Buddhapalita (Commentary to the Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way)
2. Chandrakirti (Engaging in the Middle way path and Clear-words of the Middle Way)
Aryadeva's major text: The four hundred stanzas on the middle way path

Five Treatises of Asanga (Five works of Asanga on levels of attainment)

1. Grounds of Yogic Practices
2. Compendium of Ascertainment
3. Compendium of Bases
4. Compendium of Edumerators
5. Compendium of Explanation

Major text by Vasubandhu: Root text of the Treasure of Knowledge, and Self - Commentary to the Root of the treatises of knowledge

Seven treatises on valid cognition (Seven works of Dharmakirti on the study of valid cognition):

1. Commentary on Valid Cognition
2. Discernment of Valid Cognition
3. Drop of Reasoning on Valid Cognition
4. Drop of Logical Reasoning
5. Analysis of Relationship
6. Establishing Alternative Continuum
7. Science of Debate

Major text by Gunaprabha: Root Sutra to the Monastic Discipline, and Self – Commentary on the Root Sutra to the Monastic Discipline

There are many treatises by Shakyaprabha on the subject of monastic discipline.

The five treatises of Buddhist philosophy and the ultimate master:

1. Perfection of Wisdom (Maitriya Buddha)
2. Middle Way (Nagarjuna and Aryadeva)
3. Valid Cognition (Dignaga and Dharmakirti)
4. Monastic Discipline (Gunaprabha and Shakyaprabha)
5. Treasure of Knowledge (Asanga and Vasubandhu)

March 23, 2008

1. Tsong Khapa relies upon the profound teachings of Najarguna expressed in his scriptures. Enlightenment requires “wisdom” – the experience of emptiness. The study of Najarguna prepares the mind for the experience of emptiness.
2. Tsong Khapa is the highest scholar of sutra. His intellectual level is very high. In his early 20s, he composed the *Golden Ornament of Wisdom*. This work is presently used by the three great monasteries to teach the Perfection of Wisdom. Other scholars bow to him.
3. Of the two vehicles: Perfection and Vajra – the Vajra vehicle is superior. Just as the sun gives more light than the moon, so does is tantra practice deeper and more profound than sutra practice. Tantra can lead to enlightenment in one lifetime; sutra takes 3 countless eons. You are foolish if you are a scholar and don't have sufficient knowledge of the vajra vehicle. However, successful tantra practice requires a firm foundation in the sutras.
4. Tantra practice is “more rare than the Buddhas”: There will be 1,000 Buddhas, but the secret mantra is taught only during the time of the First Buddha, the Fourth Buddha (Shakyamuni), the Eleventh Buddha, and the Final Buddha. The First Buddha and the Final Buddha perform all the deeds of all the Buddhas.
5. The two siddhis refer to
 - a) magical powers
 - b) enlightenment

April 13 & 27

1. Four classes of tantra correspond to the 4 pleasures of the Desire Realm. Use the pleasures of the Desire Realm as a Path. Transform Pleasure into a Path
 - a. Looking/Action Tantra (*Kriya*)
 - b. Gestures/Performance Tantra (*Charya*)
 - c. Touching/Yoga Tantra
 - d. Intercourse/Highest Tantra (*Anuttarayoga*)
2. In higher realms, each level has its own pleasures
3. First three tantras enjoy pleasure only through meditation. Yoga tantra—only touching and fondling—never sexual intercourse
4. *Anuttarayoga* – has two main classes
 - a. No actual presence of a partner (just visualize) and experience joy through meditation
 - b. With partner
5. Practice

- a. when you can transform poison into medicine, then you can do highest tantra. You have to have that ability. Simply receiving an initiation, does not mean that you can do it.
- b. For a beginner, the best way is to meditate and then you know your own ability and at which level you should be practicing. If you are not prepared, you are not a proper container.
- c. You must have received an Empowerment in order to practice. This empowers your mind—ripens your mind to liberate yourself.
- d. Assumption is that the practitioner has achieved the altruistic mind and his level of compassion is much stronger and his aim is to benefit others.

6. Father Tantra and Mother Tantra

- a. Father Tantra: the main focus is on the Rainbow Body. You visualize transforming self into a deity. Your mental state must be completely pure—the nature of a rainbow. The appearance of this thought depends on the deity you are practicing.
- b. Mother Tantra: the main focus is the ultimate clear light. This refers to the third path (seeing) when a practitioner achieves a direct understanding of the mind. This is not the ordinary third path; it is the path of a tantric practitioner. You then have the qualification for the completion stage.

7. Kalachakra Tantra

- a. Vimalaprabha (*The Stainless Light*) elucidates the Kalachakra Tantra.
- b. Highest tantra
- c. Unique in that the external environment of sentient beings is classified by time periods
- d. Buddha manifested as Vajradhara at Amarivati at the same time he was teaching the Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma at Vultures Peak
- e. Buddha taught to the King of Shambala.

May 11

1. To learn the scriptures, you must follow three stages:
 - a. Hearing
 - b. Realization
 - c. Actual practice
2. The great scholars explained the 4 types of tantra:
 - a. action.

- b. performance
 - c. yoga
 - d. highest yoga.
3. Ultimately, the teachings of the Buddha come down to tantra and the Guhyasamaja, the King of Tantras. It is very secret. You can learn it only through oral instruction of the Guru. A speciality of Je Rinpoche is the Complete Stage, especially of Guhyasamaja. This tantra is father tantra and focuses on the illusory body.
 4. An extremely subtle wind mind is used as the object of observation. It is the rainbow body which is extremely pure and is unable to obstruct. It is formed by the subtle wind mind and the appearance of that mind is Dorje Chang or the deity Vajradhara with 3 faces and 6 hands
 5. The rainbow (can't grasp it) body is a pure mind made from the extremely subtle mind. This is a consciousness that manifests as a rainbow. It is not like our regular consciousness: gross body consciousness with 6 senses. It is subtle clear of all defilements and the 52 mental states and mental factors.
 - a. Extremely subtle
 - b. Pure – no layers of negativities – no obscurations
 - c. Unable to obstruct – not like our physical body.

May 18

1. Lama Tsongkhapa was an expert scholar in these areas:
 - a. Oral teachings
 - b. Debate
 - c. Composition (scriptures)
2. Oral teachings: he did not look at books while he taught both sutra and tantra. At one time, he taught for 3 months and on each day, he taught 15 sessions (15 heaps). He taught Indian scholars, the root texts, and their commentaries:
 - Valid cognition
 - Perfection of wisdom
 - Abhidharma
 - Root commentary on the vinaya
 - 5 great works of Maitreya
 - 5 heaps of Nagarjuna
 - Middle Way
 - 400 verses of the Middle Way of Vasubandhu
 - Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*
3. Debate: he debated in many monasteries – circumambulated Tibet's monasteries
His special fields of expertise were in
 - Perfection of Wisdom

- Middleway Philosophy
 - Valid Cognition (logic)
4. Composition: He created 18 “heaps” of texts. He defined the most difficult points and then gave detailed explanations. He had more than 50 teachers – many of them were of the Sakya tradition.
 5. Dedication: He kept the discipline during his entire life. He never had a wife or consort and never drank alcohol. He did so to benefit his disciples. Because of his discipline, the Gelugpa sect is pure.

His autobiography was written to uphold the Holy Dharma.

- Increase virtue
- Teach the entrydoor for his disciples
- So that all may enter the path