

[Pabongka Rinpoche's *Opening Your Eyes to What You Should Keep, and What You Should Give Up*, a commentray on Je Tsongkapa's *Source of All My Good*]

*, , KHYAB BDAG RDO RJE 'CHANG PHA BONG KHA PA DPAL BZANG
POS, BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA'I NYING PO BSDUS PA YON TAN
GZHIR GYUR MA'I ZAB KHRID GNANG SKABS KYI BRJED BYANG MDOR
BSDUS SU BKOD PA BLANG DOR LTA BA'I MIG RNAM PAR 'BYED PA
ZHES BYA BA BZHUGS SO, ,

Herein contained is a book named *Opening Your Eyes to What You Should Keep, and What You Should Give Up*.¹ It consists of a brief series of notes that were taken at a teaching delivered by the Lord of the Secret World, Vajradhara, the Keeper of the Diamond, the Good and Glorious Pabongka.² The teaching was a profound explanation of the text known as the *Source of All My Good*,³ a work which is the distilled essence of the Steps of the path to Buddhahood.

,RJE BTZUN BLA MA DAM PA BLO BZANG THUB DBANG RDO RJE
'CHANG CHEN PO BDE CHEN SNYING PO'I ZHABS KYI {pd}MOR SGO
GSUM GUS PAS PHYAG 'TSAL LO,

In deepest reverence, expressed through all three doors,⁴
I bow to the lotus feet of the person who is the Essence
of Great Bliss, the Venerated One, the Holy Lama,
Lobsang the Great, Lord of All Buddhas,
the One Who Keeps the Diamond.⁵

HOW THE TEACHING WAS GIVEN

,DE LA 'DIR KHYAB BDAG 'KHOR LO'I MGON PO RDO RJE 'CHANG PHA
BONG KHA PA BKA' DRIN MNYAM MED DE NYID KYI ZHAL SNGA NAS,
DUS GSUM GYI RGYAL BA THAMS CAD GANG NAS GSHEGS PA'I
GZHUNG LAM GCIG PU, BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA'I SNYING PO
BSDUS PA, YAB RJE RGYAL BA GNYIS PA'I GDAMS PA'I NYING KHU
GSUNG RAB KUN GYI BCUD PHYUNG BA LTA BU YON TAN GZHIR GYUR
MA'AM BYIN RLABS SPUNGS ZHUS SU GRAGS PA'I ZAB KHRID LEGS PAR
NOS SKABS KYI ZIN THO MDO TZAM BRI BA LA,

Here I will give just a brief account of a wonderful teaching bestowed upon us by the One, the Lord of the Secret World, the Savior of His Followers, and the Keeper of the Diamond: Pabongka Rinpoche, whose kindness knows no match. His teaching was a

*profound clarification of the one and only highway used by each and every Victor of the past, present, and future to reach the highest goals; the Steps on the path to Buddhahood, its very essence distilled; the inner nectar of the instructions imparted by our Father, the Lord, the Buddha himself come again; and the ultimate elixir extracted from the highest of words, the Speech of the Enlightened Ones: that is to say, the work known to us as the Source of All My Good, also called Begging for a Mountain of Blessings.*⁶

THOG MAR RJE NYID NAS DBU BSKUL GYIS SHER SNYING DANG SENG
GDONG BZLOG PA NAS, BDE LEGS SHOG CES PA'I BAR SPYI LTAR DANG ,

As he began the teaching, the Lord himself led us in reciting the Essence of Wisdom, and then the prayer of Simhamukhi--the Angel with the Face of a Lion, from the part where we ward off any evil that might disrupt the teaching, all the way up to the words "May goodness come to be," in the way we usually do them.

YANG RE RE BZHIN DBU BSKUL TE, PHUN TSOGS DGE LEGS, BYAMS PA
THOGS MED, 'JAM DBYANGS YOD MED, THUGS RJE CHEN PO, BSHAD
SGRUB GDAMS PA'I, GANGS CAN SHING RTA'I, SKYABS GSUM KUN 'DUS,
RAB 'BYAMS GSUNG RAB, SKYE BA KUN TU RNAMS {SHI}OOO KA RE
LHAN DU GSUNGS,

Then in turns we took the lead, sounding out in unison the various verses that include the words "Virtues perfected finally," and "Loving One, Avalokiteshvara, with Asanga," and "Gentle Voice, Manjushri, with the one who destroyed the extremes of being and not," and "The one of great compassion," and "Teaching what to learn, to reach," and "Founder from the Land of Snows," and "All three places of refuge in one," and "The constellations of the highest of words," and "In all my lives."

DBU MDZAD KYIS BSKUL NAS MANDLA SA GZHI SPOS BYUGS, MDUN GYI
NAM MKHAR SENG KHRI, PHUL BYUNG MKHYEN BRTZE'I CHU 'DZIN, AI
DAM GU RU BCAS DANG ,

The lead then went to the chanting master, who guided us in the offering of the mandala, beginning with "The great Earth, filled with the smell of incense," and on through "Atop a lion throne in the space before me," as well as "Sponges of the sky, made of most excellent knowledge and love," along with the lines that begin with idam guru.

YANG RDO RJE 'CHANG MCHOOG NAS DBU BSKUL GNANG STE, SANGS
RGYAS CHOS TSOGS LAN GSUM SDEB GSUNGS DANG , DE NAS, LHA
DANG LHA MIN SOGS DANG , LHA YI SKAD DANG SOGS {SHI}OO KA RE

RE RJE NYID NAS GNANG BA'I MTHAR,

The lead returned to the Keeper of the Diamond, who deigned to direct us thrice through the prayer for taking refuge and developing the wish for enlightenment, the one that includes the words "To the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha." Here finally the Lord himself bespoke the verses containing the lines "Pleasure beings and those near so," along with "In the language of pleasure beings" and the rest.⁷

THE PRELIMINARIES I. Why the Steps?

'O LAGS SO, DE YANG NI JI SKAD DU KHAM GSUM CHOS KYI RGYAL PO
TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO'I GSUNGS LAS, DAL BA'I RTEN 'DI YID BZHIN
NOR LAS LHAG, CES SOGS 'DREN PAR MDZAD DE, THAR 'DOD KHYED
KYANG DE BZHIN BSKYANG 'TSAL LO, , ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR, RANG
CAG RNAMS 'KHOR BA THOG MED NAS DA LTA PHAN CHAD LA 'GRO
BA RIGS DRUG TU SKYE BA 'DI MA BLANGS BYA BA GCIG KYANG MED
PAR,

"And so we begin," said the Lama.

Let me remind you, he said, of those lines by the King of the Dharma of all three realms--Tsongkapa the Great; the ones that mention "This life of spiritual leisure, more precious than a jewel that can give you whatever you wish for."⁸ The refrain throughout these verses reads: "Those of you who wish for freedom should seek to master this, as I have done." You and I have lived in this circle of suffering life forever; and there is not a single form of life, in any of the six realms of pain, that we have not already lived.

'PHRAL GYI BDE BA DANG SDUG BSNGAL SNA TSOGS PA MYONG STE
SRID RTZE NAS MNAR MED KYI BAR 'KHYAMS 'KHYAMS NAS BSDAD
KYANG SNYING PO GANG YANG MA LON PAR DON MED STONG ZAD
DU SHOR NAS DA DUNG YANG KHAM GSUM GYI 'KHOR BA'I NANG DU
'KHOR DANG 'KHOR NGES PA 'DI GA YIN,

In these lives we have suffered, and enjoyed the occasional short-lived pleasure, wandering aimlessly from that high level known as the "Peak of Existence," then down to the lowest hell, "Torment with No Respite," then back, and back again. We have lived this way for time with no beginning, and yet we have never gotten any meaning out of it; the time has slipped away from us useless, senseless, empty. And so still we are here, circling up and down in the three

realms of the wheel of life, and certain we are to continue the round.

SNGON CHAD NGA RANG TSO STABS LEGS KYI DBANG GIS THANG 'GA'
TZAM LA BLA MA DKON MCHOOG GI THUGS RJES BZUNGS TE LAS BZANG
PO STOBS LDAN 'GA' BSAGS PA'I MTHU LAS DA LTA MI KHOM PA'I
SKYON DANG BRAL BA'I DAL 'BYOR GYI RTEN BZANG PO 'DI LAN CIG
TZAM RNYED PA RED MOD DE,

At some point in days gone by, you and I through sheer good luck were taken for some brief moments under the care of a Lama, or the Three Jewels, and so were able to gather together some bit of pure and powerful karma. The force of this karma, I will admit, has allowed us to gain, just this once, the present life we enjoy--full of the various pleasures and fortunes, free of the problems that come when we lack the conditions that allow a proper spiritual practice.

DA RES LUS RTEN DANG , BLA MA DANG , CHOS SOGS MTHUN RKYEN
THAMS CAD 'DZOMS TE, CHOS BYED PA'I NUS PA RANG LAG NA YOD
PA'I DUS 'DIR SKYE BA GTAN GYI 'DUN MA SGRUB THUB PA ZHIG MA
BYUNG NA,

I will admit as well that everything we need has come together for us this time: we have a Lama, we have some Dharma to practice, we have every favorable condition that we need. And so the capability to follow the spiritual path is something we now hold in our own two hands. Yet suppose we fail; suppose that we find ourselves unable to achieve the ultimate goal of the infinite lives we have led.

SLAR YANG MI KHOM PA'I GNAS SU LTUNG BAR 'GYUR BA LA THE
TSOM MED, DE LTAR LHUNG NA MI KHOM PA'I GNAS NGAN GA 'DRA
ZHIG TU SKYES KYANG SDUG BSNGAL KHO NA LAS MA 'DAS SHING ,

Beyond a doubt then we will fall back again to the births where we have no chance for Dharma. And when we fall it matters not where we fall; wherever we fall in a birth without the Dharma, our life can never be anything but pain.

PHYIN CHAD MI KHOM PA'I SKYE BA BZLOG PA'I THABS NI DA RES
CHOS RNAM DAG CIG BSGRUB PA LAS LHAG PA BYAR MED LA, CHOS DE
YANG DA LTA NYID NAS MA BSGRUBS NA, RANG NYID 'CHI BAR NGES
SHING NAM 'CHI CHA MED PA DANG , 'CHI BA'I 'OG TU JI LTAR 'GYUR
SNYAM NA,

The way to avoid ever taking another birth where we have no chance for Dharma is to practice the Dharma purely now; there is no better way at all. And our practice must start this minute; you will die, you must die, it is certain you will die. But you've no idea when. And what will happen after that?

BDE 'GRO DANG NGAN 'GRO SO SOR 'PHEN PAS, CHOS MA 'GRUB PAR
DA LTA'I BYED STANGS NGAN PA 'DI GA'I MUS NAS SHI NA PHYI MAR
NGAN SONG RANG DU 'GRO BA LAS 'OS MED PAS,

Whatever we do now decides where we go then: if we do good, it will throw us forth into one of the better births; if we do wrong, it will throw us to a birth of misery. So suppose we fail to practice; suppose we die in the middle of our present evil way of life. It is only fitting then that we should go right where we belong: to these very births of misery.

RE ZHIG NGAN 'GRO'I SKYE BA BZLOG PA'I SLAD DU DKON MCHOG
GSUM LA SKYABS SU 'GRO ZHING , SNGON BYAS KYI SDIG PA LA GNYEN
PO STOBS BZHI'I SGO NAS BSHAGS BSDAMS SHUGS DRAG DANG , DGE
MI DGE'I BLANG DOR PHRA ZHING PHRA BA LA 'BAD,

We must then for the short term go for shelter to the Three Jewels, to keep ourselves from a birth in the lower realms. We must as well open up and admit the things we have done wrong before, and restrain ourselves in the future. To do so we must make strong and heartfelt use of the four forces⁹ that counteract the power of the wrong. We must too put all our effort into taking up even the smallest virtue, and giving up even the slightest harms we commit against others.

DE'I STENG DU LAM LHAG PA'I BSLAB PA GSUM NYAMS SU BLANGS NA,
RANG NYID 'KHOR BA'I 'JIGS PA MTHA' DAG LAS GROL BAR 'GYUR LA,
DE LTAR RANG GCIG PU 'KHOR BA LAS THAR BA TZAM GYIS KYANG MI
CHOG PAR, SLOB DPON TZA{ndr} GO MIS,

If in addition to all this we are able to follow perfectly the path of the three extraordinary trainings,¹⁰ then we ourselves will come to be free of each and every fear of the circle of suffering life. But it's not enough if it is only you who escapes the circle, for we must recall the words of the Master Chandragomi:

,SHIN TU RNYED SLA'I RTZVA KHAM 'GA' LTA

PHYUGS KYANG RANG NYID ZA, ,SHIN TU
SKOM PAS GDUNGS PA'ANG CHU ZHIG RNYED
NA DGA' MGUR 'THUNG , ,DI NA SKYES BU
GZHAN DON BYED PAR BRTZON PA GANG YIN
PA, ,DE 'DI'I BRJID BAG YIN TE DE BDE SKYES PU'I
RTZAL DE 'PHAGS,

Even a cow knows how
To take care of himself,
To eat a few clumps of grass
He easily comes across;

Even the beast can merrily drink
From a pool of water he finds
As bitter thirst Torments him.

But think now what it is
To put your whole heart
Into taking care of others;

This is glory,
This is a park of pleasure,
This is the ultimate.

,NYI MA RLABS CHEN RTA ZHON RGYU BA
SNANG BYED GANG YIN DANG , ,KHUR LA MI
RTZEG SA YIS 'JIG RTEN 'DEGS PA GANG YIN DE,
,RANG DON 'GA' MED CHEN PO RNAMS KYI
RANG BZHIN DE 'DRA STE, ,DE DAG 'JIG RTEN
PHAN DANG BDE BA'I RO LA GCIG TU GZHOL,

The Sun
Climbs aboard his fantastic chariot,
Flies across the sky,
Lights up all the world.

The Earth
Raises up his mighty arms,
Bears the load,
Holds up all mankind.

And so is the way
Of those great beings
Who wish nothing
For themselves,

Their lives devoted
To a single song:
The well-being and the happiness
Of every living thing.¹¹

,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR SNYING STOBS CHEN PO'I SGO NAS SEMS CAN
GZHAN GYI DON BSGRUB STE DUD 'GRO DANG KHYAD THON PA ZHIG
BYA DGOS, DE DGOS PA'I RGYU MTSAN YANG ,

We must do as the verses say: we must distinguish ourselves from common animals, we must find that great courage of heart to accomplish the goals of all other sentient kind. And there is a good reason why we should.

SEMS CAN THAMS CAD RANG GI PHA MA LAN GRANGS BGRANG LAS
'DAS PAR BYED MYONG BA SHA STAG YIN CING , DE BYAS PA'I DUS SU
DRIN CHEN PO'I SGO NAS YANG YANG MA BSKYANGS PA MED,

Every single creature in the universe has been our father, and been our mother, not once, but more times than numbers can count. And there is not a one who when they served as our parent did not shower us with every deep kindness, over and over again.

DE'I PHYIR DE DAG LA DRIN GZO'I BSAM PA MED NA, KLU'I RGYAL PO
RNGA SGRA'I TSIGS SU BCAD PA LAS,

Suppose then I were to forget their kindness, and give no thought to returning it. This would truly be an evil way to act, the way of a person without a conscience, of one who had no shame. For the *Verses of Drumsong, King of the Serpentes*, say as well:

,RGYA MTSO DANG NI RI RAB DANG , ,SA
RNAMS BDAG GI KHUR MIN GYI, ,BYAS PA MI
GZO GANG YIN PA, ,DE NI BDAG GI KHUR CHEN
YIN, ,ZHES DANG ,

The sea is not my problem,
My task is not the mountains,
My job is not the earth;
My calling's rather to attend
That I should never fail
Repaying kindness granted me.12

GZHAN YANG , , DRIN LA LAN YOD BZANG PO
STE, ,DRIN GZO MED PA NGAN PA YIN,

So too say the lines,
A kindness returned is goodness,
And evil is kindness unreturned.

,ZHES PA LTAR MA RABS KHREL MED KYI LUGS NGAN PA YIN PAS,
RANG RES SEMS CAN GYI DRIN LAS DA LTA LUS RTEN BZANG PO TSUN
CHAD RNYED SKABS 'DIR DRIN GZO BA DGOS, DRIN LAN BSAB PA'I DUS
KYANG DA RES RANG GIS CHOS LDAN GYI LUS RTEN PHUN SUM TSOGS
PA RNYED PA'I DUS 'DIR MGO 'DZUGS THUB PA ZHIG DGOS KYI,

Think: everything we have now, from this precious human body on up, has come to us through the kindness of other living beings. And so it is now that we must repay them. The repayment must begin here, in these circumstances, while I am able, while I possess this perfect form for the practice of the Dharma.

DE MIN 'DI NAS DON CHEN PO BSGRUB RGYU MA BYUNG BAR STONG
LOG TU SHOR NA, SEMS CAN GYI DON BYED PA LTA BZHAG, RANG GIS
BDE 'GRO'I RTEN RNYED PA TZAM YANG DKA' BA YOD,

If now I cannot accomplish this great goal, if all I have gained is wasted, then there is little point in claiming to work for every living being: it is little likely that I myself will be able even to reach the higher realms of suffering life again.

'O NA DRIN JI LTAR GZE SNYAM NA, DRIN GZO'I MCHOG TU GYUR PA NI
BDE BA THAMS CAD DANG LDAN PA DANG , SDUG BSNAL THAMS
CAD DANG BRAL BAR BYED PA YIN PAS DE LTAR BYA'O SNYAM DU
BYAMS PA DANG SNYING RJE SHUGS DRAG TU BSKYED CING ,

What is the way then to pay this kindness back? No way would be higher than to

see to it that every living creature has every happiness there is, and that every living creature is free of every pain which exists. And I will do it! Raise these thoughts of love and compassion up in your heart--bring them on fiercely.

SEMS CAN THAMS CAD BDE BA THAMS CAD DANG LDAN PA DANG
SDUG BSNGAL THAMS CAD DANG BRAL BA DE YANG GZHAN LA RAG
MA LAS PAR RANG NYID GCIG PUS BYED SNYAM PA'I KHUR DU 'KHYER
BA DGOS,

And then you must resolve to take the load upon yourself: "I will rely on no one else in this work; it should be I, and I alone who brings every happiness to every being, and frees each one from every pain."

DE LTAR BYED PA'I NUS PA YOD PA SANGS RGYAS NYAG GCIG LAS
GZHAN SU YANG MI 'DUG,SEMS CAN KHO NA'I DON DU SANGS RGYAS
KYI GO 'PHANG ZHIG THOB NA DON GNYIS PHUN SUM TSOGS PA
BRNYES TE RANG DON YANG MA TSANG BA MED PA ZHAR LA 'BYUNG ,

And yet the ability to perform this noble task is had only by a single being: only by a Buddha, there's no one else at all who can do it. If for the sole purpose of all other living creatures I can reach the state of a Buddha, then I can fulfill completely both of the ultimate goals,¹⁴ and so by the way achieve everything I ever needed as well.

GZHAN DU NA NYAN RANG DGRA BCOM PA YIN YANG RANG DON
YONGS SU MA RDZOGS LA, GZHAN DON YANG NYI TSE BA TZAM LAS
MED,

If this is not the way I go--if instead I achieve a lower nirvana, and become one of those foe destroyers they call a listener, or a "self-made buddha,"¹⁵ then I cannot achieve all that I need myself, and can accomplish no more than a shadow of what others need from me.

DES NA DON GNYIS MTHAR PHYIN PA'I SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG
DE SGRUB DGOS, DE LA BSGRUB TSUL SHES DGOS, DE LA CHOS THOS
DGOS PAR 'DUG PAS DE'I PHYIR BDAG GIS CHOS 'DI LTA BU THOS NAS
NYAMS SU BLANGS TE SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG SGRUB SNYAM DU
THEG CHEN SEMS BSKYED GSAL 'DEBS PA DANG , DMA' MTHA'ANG
SEMS BSKYED BCOS MA TSUN CHAD KYI RTZIS ZIN PA'I SGO NAS GSAN
DGOS PA YIN,

And so I must reach the state of a Buddha, the One who has come to the final end where his own and other's needs are perfectly filled. To do so, I must know how. To know how, I must learn how. I will begin with the Dharma of this very teaching, and others like it; I will follow these instructions well, and I will come to the state of Buddhahood itself. Think these thoughts to yourself, here as our teaching starts, for they are the greater way's Wish for

Buddhahood. At the very least, you must try to imitate this line of thinking; even if you cannot do the real thing, let these thoughts dwell in your heart all through the teaching that you are about to hear.

GSAN PAR BYA BA'I CHOS NI, 'JAM MGON BLA MA TZONG KHA PA
CHEN POS BYANG RVA SGRENG RGYAL BA'I DPEN GNAS KYI YANG
DGON BRAG SENG GE 'DRA BA'I ZHOL DU BSTAN 'GRO 'BA' ZHIG LA
DGONGS NAS RJES 'JUG GI GDUL BYA RNAMS LA GDAMS PA DON DANG
LDAN PA YON TAN GZHIR GYUR MA'AM, BYIN RLABS SPUNGS ZHUS SU
GRANGS PA'I GZHUNG ,

And what is the teaching that you are to hear? It was spoken by our Gentle Savior, by the Lama, the Great Tsongkapa, at Yangon--the hermitage of the Victor. This was at the monastery of Radreng, standing to the north, at the foot of a great crag of rock shaped like the mouth of a lion.¹⁶

The Lord imparted these vital instructions to his disciples there, acting only for the good of living beings and the Buddha's Word. The title of the text he spoke is the *Source of All My Good*; it is also known by another name, *Begging for a Mountain of Blessings*.

BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA MGO BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL NAS,
MJUG MI SLOB PA'I ZUNG 'JUG GI BAR MDO SNGAGS KUN GYI GNAD
TSANG LA MA NOR BA,

This is a work of the kind we call the "Steps to Buddhahood"; books like this contain within themselves each and every crucial point in all the open and secret teachings of Buddhism. They present these points without the slightest error, from the very beginning to the very end: from finding and serving a spiritual guide on up to the perfect secret Union, where there is nothing more to learn.

RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB THAMS CAD KYI SNYING PO GCIG TU BSDUS

PA'I THEG PA CHEN PO'I CHOS KYI YANG RTZE BLA NA MED PA 'DOMS
PAR MDZAD PA 'DI NYID YIN ZHING ,

These teachings on the Steps are the pure essence of everything that all the victorious Buddhas have ever spoken, the sum rolled into one. They are the one and only form of the Teaching that embodies all of the greater way; they are the point of the tip of the highest, matchless peak.

RJE BLA MA'I NYAMS MGUR LAS, ,LAM MCHOG GNYIS KAR DGOS PA'I
THUN MONG LAM, ,JI BZHIN BSKYED NAS

Our Lord Lama, in his work entitled Songs of My Spiritual Life, says,

When within yourself you've developed
The path that is shared,
The one that's needed
For both the highest paths...17

,ZHES PA LTAR SPYIR MDO SNGAGS GANG YIN YANG CHOS BYANG
CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI MED THABS MED LA, LHAG PAR DU RGYAL
MCHOG LNGA PA CHEN POS,

What he means is that, speaking in a general way, this instruction on the Steps to Buddhahood is one that you could never do without, whether you are practicing the open or the secret teachings of Buddhism. To put it more specifically, the Great Fifth of the Dalai Lamas has said,

,SKYES PU CHEN PO'I CHOS LUNGS SNYING PO'I DON, ,GANG DER RGYU
DANG 'BRAS BU'I THEG PA LAS, ,CHES ZAB GSANG BA SNGAGS ZHES
RAB GRAGS KYANG , ,THUN MONG LAM GYIS RGYUD SBYANGS MA
SONG BA, ,MA DUL GLANG PO ZHON LTAR RANG NYID PHUNG ,

Everybody talks of it,
The Secret Word, The Most Profound,
Essential thread
In the River of Dharma
For those of the great capacity;

But try it before
Your mind is trained

In the path that both them share,

Climb atop a mighty elephant
Still wild, and not yet tamed;
You will only lose Yourself.¹⁸

,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR GSANG SNGAGS KYI SGOR 'JUG BAR 'DOD PA
RNAMS KYIS SNGON DU LAM THUN MONG BAS RGYUD SBYANG BA 'DI
HA CANG GAL CHE BA YOD,

It is absolutely vital then, for anyone with hopes of entering the door that leads to the way of the Secret Word, that you train your mind first in this path shared by both the open and secret teachings.

GZHUNG 'DI LA BYIN RLABS SPUNGS ZHU ZHES GSUNGS PA'I DON
YANG BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL NAS ZUNG 'JUG GI BAR GYI RTOGS PA
THAMS CAD GCIG TU SPUNGS TE BYIN RLABS KYI TSUL DU ZHU BAS NA
DE LTAR BRJOD LA,

Now there is a reason why this text is known as "Begging for a Mountain of Blessings." As we recite it we are *entreating* our Lama to grant us, in one big *pile* or mountain, each and every spiritual realization: from finding and following a spiritual guide as we should, on up to the perfect Union. And we are asking that he do so in the form of a *personal blessing* from himself.

DGE BSHES STON PA'I ZHAL NAS, BSTAN PA THAMS CAD GRUB BZHI
LAM GYIS 'KHYER SHES PA NGA'I BLA MA'I KHYAD CHOS MIN PA LA
MED,

As the spiritual friend Tonpa has spoken,

The ability to wrap the totality of the teachings into
one is a special skill of my Lama's--for the Father,
nothing is not a teaching.

,CES GSUNGS PA DANG , ,NGO MTSAR BKA' NI SDE SNOD GSUM YIN TE,
,GDAMS PA SKYES BU GSUM GYIS MDZES PA YIN, ,BKA' GDAMS RIN
CHEN GSER GYI 'PHRENG BA 'DI, 'GRO BA GANG GIS GRANGS KYANG
DON YOD 'GYUR,

He has said as well that:

His wondrous word is all three the collections,
Advice adorned by teachings of three scopes,
A gold and jewel rosary of the Keepers,
Meaningful to all who read its beads.²⁰

,CES PA LTAR, BYANG CHUB LAM GYIS RIM PA 'DI NI, RJE BLA MAS LAM
RIM CHE CHUNG NAS GSUNGS PA LTAR KHYAD CHOS GSUM DANG
CHE BA BZHI'I SGO NAS CHOS GZHAN DANG GZHAN LAS KHYAD PAR
DU 'PHAGS LA, RGYAL BA'I BKA' SDE SNOD GSUM GYI GNAD BSDUS PA,
CHOS PHUNG BRGYAD KHRI BZHI STONG GI 'GAG MDO LTA BU, DUS
GSUM GYI RGYAL BA THAMS CAD GANG NAS GSHEG PA'I GZHUNG
LAM GCIG PU YIN TE, YON TAN RIN PO CHE SDUD PA LAS,

Geshe Tonpa is describing here what our Lord Lama has spoken in all his presentations of the Steps of the path, both the brief and more detailed: that these very Steps are far superior to every other form of instruction, by virtue of their three extraordinary qualities, and four different kinds of greatness.²¹ They contain each and every crucial point in the three collections, which are the entire teachings of the Buddha. They are the single crossroads where all the 84,000 massive stores of the Dharma intersect,²² they are the one single way by which each and every victorious Buddha has travelled, or travels now, or ever again will travel. As the shorter *Gem of Fine Qualities* says it,

,RGYAL BA 'DAS DANG MA BYON DA LTAR GANG BZHUGS PA, ,KUN
LAM PHA ROL PHYIN PA 'DI YIN GZHAN MA YIN, ,ZHES GSUNGS PAS SO,

It is this perfection, nothing else,
which is the path that's shared
By all the Victors, stay they in
the past, the present, or the future.²³

DES NA RANG CAG BLA MA'I DRUNG NAS DBANG LUNG KHRID SOGS
ZHU BA DANG , GZHUNG BKA' BOD LNGA LA THOS PA MTHIL PHYIN
BYAS ZER BSOGS JI 'DRA ZHIG YIN YANG MTHAR MAL RIM RANG LA
GCIG TU DRIL TE NYAMS SU LEN THUB PA MA BYUNG NA, LNGA PA
CHEN POS,

People like you and I can go to great Lamas all we want, and receive from them

high initiations, or special oral transmissions, and teachings on texts or the like. We can claim to have studied the five great classics,²⁴ and plumbed them to their depths, it doesn't matter. But if in the end we are unable to put these Steps into practice within our own lives, joining them all into one, then there's a risk that we'll end up as the Great Fifth described it:

,MI SHES BLUN PO TSE 'DI'I DON GYI CHED, ,MI
DGE'I LAS LA 'JUG PA BDEN MOD KYI, ,KHO BO
GSUNG RAB MANG PO THOS BZHIN DU, ,GTAN
'DUN RLUNG LA BSKUR BA NGO RE GNONG ,

True we see fools
Who know no better,
Doing what's wrong
For things of this life.

But we err worse
Who've studied much
The holiest of words,

And yet still see
Our ultimate hopes
Swept away on the wind.²⁵

,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR 'GRO NYEN YOD PAS, THOS PA BYAS PA KHA
NANG DU BSKOR TE CHOS BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA'I CHE BA BZHI
PO RANG RGYUD LA 'BYOR BA ZHIG BYA DGOS,

So you must turn your learning within, into Dharma: you must take those four great qualities of the Steps to Buddhahood and apply them to your own heart.

DER MA ZAD STAG TSANG LO TZA' BAS, ,GSUNG RAB MTHA' DAG
KHYAD PAR RDO RJE'I THEG,RGYUD SDE MTHA' DAG KHYAD PAR BLA
MED DON, ,RIM GNYIS MTHA' DAG KHYAD PAR SGYU LUS LA, ,SNGON
MED LEGS BSHAD GTER CHEN KHYOD LA BSTOD, ,CES SOGS DANG ,

And there is more you should know; verses like those of the Master Translator of Taktsang:

I sing Your praises,

Vast treasure house
Of fine explanation
We lacked before,

Elucidation of all
The highest of speech,
Especially the diamond way;

Teachings on all
The secret groups,
Especially the Unsurpassed;

On all the parts
Of both the levels,
Especially the magic body.

The lines beginning from "Diamond Way" refer to the secret teachings of Buddhism.²⁶

KRMA PA MI BSKYED RDO RJE, ,BYANG GI PHYOGS 'DIR RGYAL BA'I
BSTAN PA LA, ,PHAL CHER LOG PA 'BA' ZHIG SPYOD PA'I SKABS, ,KHRUL
MED BYI DOR MDZAD PA'I TZONG KHA PA, ,RI BO DGA' LDAN PA LA
BSTOD PAR BGYI, ,ZHES SOGS LTAR SKU TSE'I SMAD DU RJE BLA MA LA
DBANG RNON CHOS RJES 'BRANGS PA'I DAD PA RMAD DU BYUNG BA
SKYES NAS BSTOD PA PHUL BA DANG ,

There are as well the words of the Karmapa, Mikyu Dorje, who in the later part of his life developed for Lord Tsongkapa an extraordinary level of admiration, a kind that is found among those of high intelligence, who follow the Dharma not out of faith, but rather out of reason. The lines read in part:

I make this praise
To the tradition of
The Mount of the Heaven of Bliss;

To Tsongkapa,
For in these days
When the vast majority
Of those in our Northern Land

Act only wrong
With the teachings of the Victors,
He instead has wiped
And cleaned away the dirt on them,
Ever faultlessly.

RGYAL MCHOG BSKAL BZANG RGYA MTSOS KYANG , ,RNAM THAR
GTZANG MA DGA' LDAN BKA' BRGYUD, ,PHYOGS RE 'DZIN PA'I GRUB
MTHA' MIN NO, ,MDO SNGAGS THAMS CAD GDAMS PAR SHAR BA'I,
,BSHAD SGRUB BSTAN PA'I NYING KHU LAGS SO,

That highest of Victors, Kelsang Gyatso, has said too:

It is a pure tradition,
The lineage of the Heaven of Bliss;
It is no biased
Or limited school of thought.
It is the essential nectar,
To learn and practice the Teaching
So all the open and secret Word
Seems personal instruction.²⁸

,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR RANG RE RI PO DGA' LDAN PA'I BKA' SROL 'DI
LA MDO SNGAGS GANG GI THAD NAS KYANG GZHAN LA MED PA'I
BSTAN PA CHA TSANG LA DRI MA DANG BRAL BA, ZAB CING MYUR BA
SOGS KHYAD CHOS 'GRAN ZLA MED PA MANG PO YOD PAS, 'JAM MGON
TZONG KHA PA CHEN POS SROL PHYE BAR MDZAD PA'I BYANG CHUB
LAM RIM 'DI LA'ANG GRUB MTHA' GZHAN PHYOGS PA DANG , BKA'
GDAMS GONG MA RNAMS LA MED PA'I MAN NGAG MTHA' YAS PA LTA
BU YOD LA,

And that's just the way it is: our scriptural tradition, that of the Mount of the Heaven of Bliss, is one that is totally complete and spotless, on both sides--in the open and the secret Word. It is a kind of teaching that is found nowhere else. And it possesses a multitude of unique and unrivalled qualities: its depth, the speed with which it works, and so on. Thus it is that this teaching on the Steps of the Path to Buddhahood, as it was inaugurated by the Gentle Protector, Tsongkapa, looks to contain a nearly limitless number of spiritual advices found in none of the other schools, nor even among the older Keepers of the Word.²⁹

CHOS BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA 'DI LAS ZAB CING RGYA CHE BA NI, GZHAN DAG GI CHOS ZAB ZAB MO DANG , RTOGS PA MTHO MTHO MO YIN ZER BA TSO LA'ANG MED PAS, GCOD DANG BSKYED RDZOGS, RTZA RLUNG THIG LE, PHYAG CHEN RDZOGS CHEN SOGS GSANG CHEN SNGAGS KYI YANG RTZE SGROGS PA ZHIG MNGON DU BYED PA SKAD ZER KYANG , BYANG CHUB LAM RIM 'DI LA MA BR TEN NA, LAM YONGS RDZOGS RGYUD LA SKYE BA LTA CI, BAG CHAGS TZAM YANG 'JOG PAR MI NUS,

Could any system be more profound or far-reaching than this Dharma, the Steps of the Path? Certainly not those teachings that others claim are oh-so-deep, or oh-so-high and inscrutable. People chatter about attaining some realization, some supposed zenith of some very secret way: they talk of termination; they talk about the levels of creation and completion; about the channels and winds and drops; the great seal, or the great completion, whatever.³⁰ But if one never makes use of these very Steps, he can never even plant the seeds, much less bring the path in full to grow within his mind.

DE'I PHYIR 'DI LA THOS BSAM SGOM GSUM BYED PA GAL CHE BAS, 'DIR BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA'I SNYING PO BSDUS PA YON TAN GZHIR GYUR MAR GRAGS PA'I BSHAD LUNG MDOR BSDUS TZAM ZHIG 'BUL BAR BYED PA YIN GSUNGS,

This then is why it is so very important to go through the Steps, in the three stages of learning, and contemplating, and meditating upon them. So it is too that I shall now present you, said our Lama, with just a very brief explanation and oral transmission of the work known as the "Source of All My Good," for it contains within it the complete heart of the Steps of the Path to Buddhahood.

II. How to Take a Lama

'DI LA SA BCAD DU PHYE NA, LAM GYI RTZA BA BSHES GNYEN BSTEN PA'I TSUL, BSTEN NAS BLO JI LTAR SBYANG BA'I TSUL, LAM SGRUB PA'I MTHUN RKYEN 'GRUB PA DANG 'GAL RKYEN ZHI BAR GSOL BA 'DEBS PA, SKYE BA THAMS CAD DU BLA MAS RJES SU GZUNG STE SA LAM GYI 'BRAS BU MNGON DU BYED NUS PAR SMON PA DANG BCAS TE BZHI YOD PA LAS,

The text of the Source of All My Good may be divided into four different parts:

- 1) the very root of the path, which is how to take a Lama and serve him or her properly;
- 2) how to train your mind, once you have taken a Lama;
- 3) a request so that you can attain all the favorable conditions for succeeding in the path, and stop all the circumstances that might prevent you from doing so; and then finally
- 4) a prayer that in all your future lives you may be taken under the care of a Lama, and so gain the strength to reach the final end of the various levels and paths.

DANG PO NI, , YON TAN KUN GZHIR GYUR DRIN CAN RJE, ,TSUL BZHIN
 BSTEN PA LAM GYI RTZA BA RU, ,LEGS PAR MTHONG NAS 'BAD PA DU
 MA YIS, ,GUS PA CHEN POS BSTEN PAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS, ,ZHES PA'I
 SHLOO KA GCIG GIS BSTAN,

The first of these is presented in a single verse, the first one of the work:

(1)

**The source of all my good
 Is my kind Lama, my Lord;
 Bless me first to see
 That taking myself to him
 In the proper way
 Is the very root
 Of the path, and grant me then
 To serve and follow him
 With all my strength and reverence.**

DE LA RTZA BA DAD PA SBYANG BA DANG , BKA' DRIN RJES SU DRAN TE
 GUS PA BSKYED PA GNYIS, DANG PO LA'ANG BSAM PAS BSTEN TSUL
 DANG , SBYOR BAS BSTEN TSUL GNYIS YOD,

This Step of taking a Lama is itself divided into two sections: developing clear faith in him, which is the very root of the Path; and then building up reverence for him, by considering the great kindness he has paid us. The instruction in developing faith comes in two stages: how to follow a Lama in one's thoughts,

and then how to follow him in one's actions.

DE YANG Sm {bh}A{u2} tA'I RGYUD LAS, ,SKYA BA 'DZIN PA MED PAR NI,
,GRU YIS PHA ROL PHYIN MI NUS, ,YON TAN THAMS CAD RAB RDZOGS
KYANG , ,BLA MA MED NA SRID THAR MIN, ,ZHES DANG ,

Now the Secret Teaching of Sambhuta says,

You will never be able to take a boat
To the other side of the river
Unless you take the oars up in your hands.

You will never reach the end of suffering life
Without a Lama,
Even if you perfect yourself
In every other respect.³¹

SHER PHYIN MDO SDUD PA LAS, ,SANGS RGYAS CHOS RNAMS DGE BA'I
BSHES LA BR TEN TO ZHES, ,YON TAN KUN GYI MCHO G MNGA' RGYAL
BA DE SKAD GSUNGS,

The Shorter Sutra on the Perfection of Wisdom concurs:

The Victorious Buddhas,
Who possess the highest
Of all good qualities,
Speak as one when They say:
"Every single part of the Buddhist way
Depends on a Spiritual Guide."

,ZHES PA DANG , , DE LTA BAS NA BYANG CHUB DAM PA 'TSOL BA YI,
,BSAM PA DRAG LDAN MKHAS PAS NGA RGYAL NGES BCOM NAS, ,NAD
PA'I TSOGS KYIS GSO PHYIR SMAN PA BSTEN PA LTAR, ,G-YEL BA MED
PAR DGE BA'I BSHES GNYEN BSTEN PAR BYA,

It says as well:

And so the wise
Who seek the high state of enlightenment
With a fierce wish deep inside

Should smash all pride within them,
And like a mass of sick men
Who flock to medicine for a cure,
Take themselves to a spiritual guide
And serve him single-mindedly.

,ZHES DANG , 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN POS KYANG , , 'PHRAL
DANG YUN GYI BDE BA YID BZHIN DU, ,LEGS PAR 'GRIGS PA'I RTEN
'BREL RTZA BA NI, ,GSUNG RAB KUN LAS BLA MAR GSUNGS PAS NA,
,SKYABS GSUM NGO BOR BSGOMS LA GSOL BA THOB,

Our Gentle Savior, Tsongkapa the Great, has too spoken these words:

There is a single key
For finding a perfect start to reach
Your every wish, both happiness
In the short run and ultimately;

And the highest words ever spoken
Speak it always the same:
It is your Lama.

And so you must devote yourself
To meditation upon him,
Upon the essence of all
The three different kinds of refuge;
Ask him, for all your goals.³²

,CES GSUNGS PA LTAR RANG GIS SA LAM GYI YON TAN ZHIG 'THOB PAR
'DOD NA, THOG MAR DE BSGRUB TSUL STON PA'I BLA MA ZHIG NGES
PAR BSTEN DGOS,

All these lines are saying the same thing: if you have any hope of reaching up to the high spiritual qualities of the various levels and paths, then from the outset you must absolutely find and follow a Lama who can show you how to do so.

DE 'DRA'I BLA MA'ANG GANG BYUNG BYUNG GI MING DU BTAGS PAS
MI CHOOG PAR, MDO SDE RGYAN LAS GSUNGS PA LTAR SGO GSUM DUL
BA, ZHI BA, NYE BAR ZHI BA STE BSLAB GSUM DANG LDAN PA, SLOB MA
LAS YON TAN LHAG PA, BRTZON 'GRUS CHEN PO DANG LDAN PA,

LUNG GI YON TAN PHUN SUM TSOGS PA MNGA' BA, DE KHO NA NYID
RTOGS PA, CHOS SMRA BA LA MKHAS PA, SLOB MA LA BRTZE BA CHEN
PO YOD PA, CHOS JI TZAM 'CHAD KYANG SKYO NGAL MED PA BCAS
YON TAN BCU DANG LDAN PA ZHIG DANG ,

And the Lama that we are describing here is not just any one you might happen to come across; it's not just anyone they call a "Lama." Rather, he must have in him the ten high qualities described in the Jewel of the Sutras. He must first of all be subdued, at peace, and at high peace; that is to say, he must possess all three of the trainings.³³ He must display fine spiritual qualities that exceed those of his student, and exhibit exceptional effort. He should have a total mastery of the Dharma in the form of scripture, and should have realized suchness. He should be highly skilled in teaching the Dharma, he must have a great love for his disciples, and he must never become tired or discouraged in his teaching, no matter how much or how often he is called upon to do so.

DA LTA SNYIGS MA'I DUS SU DE THAMS CAD TSANG BA RNYED DKA'
NA, RJE BLA MAS, ,YIN LUGS KHONG DU CHUD CING DBANG PO DUL,
,MTHONG BA TZAM GYIS GZHAN YID 'PHROG PAR BYED, ,BSTEN PA
TZAM GYIS DGE 'PHEL SKYON 'GRIB PA'I, ,BSHES GNYEN DAM PA STEN
DANG RGYAL KHAMS PA,

We are though now in the days of degeneration, and so perhaps it is difficult to find someone who possesses each and every one of these qualifications. In such a case, we must follow the advice of the Lord of Lamas:

If you take my advice,
Man of the land of Gyalkam,
Take yourself to the ultimate
Spiritual guide:
To one who grasps Reality,
To one who has controlled his senses,
Who takes your heart away
As soon as you lay your eyes on him;
To the one that,
When you follow what he teaches,
The good in you begins to flower,
And the bad begins to fade.

,ZHES SOGS LTAR BSLAB PA GSUM GYIS THUGS RGYUD DUL BA, DE NYID

RTOGS PA, BRTZE BA DANG LDAN PA STE LNGA TSANG BA DGOS SHING,

These and other such lines are telling us that the Lama we seek must at least possess a complete set of five different qualities: He must have brought his mind under control, by following the three trainings; he must have realized thusness; and He must have love.

DMA' MTHA' DMA' MTHA'ANG CHOS DANG 'JIG RTEN GNYIS LAS CHOS GTZO BOR BYED PA, TSE 'DI DANG PHYI MA GNYIS LAS PHYI MA GTZO BOR BYED PA, RANG DANG GZHAN GNYIS LAS GZHAN GTZO BOR BYED PA, SGO GSUM BAG MED DU MI GTONG BA, SLOB MA LAM LOG LAM GOL LTA SPYOD PHYIN CI LOG TU MI 'KHRID PA STE YON TAN DE DAG DANG LDAN PA ZHIG NGES PAR DGOS,

As a bare minimum, the Lama must surely fit the following description. He must occupy himself more with the Dharma than with the things of the world. He must as well occupy himself more with the concerns of the future life, than with those of the present one. He must occupy himself more with helping others, than with helping himself. He is never careless in what he does, or says, or thinks. And, finally, he never leads his disciples along a path which is mistaken.

DE LTA'I BLA MA MTSAN LDAN RNYED NAS TSUL GZHIN BSTEN PA'I PHAN YON 'DI PHYI' LEGS TSOGS THAMS CAD 'BYUNG BA DANG , MA BSTEN PA DANG BSTEN TSUL LOG PA'I NYES DMIGS 'PHRAL DANG YUN GYI SDUG BSNAL MI BZAD PA DU MA 'BYUNG TSUL RNAMS LEGS PAR SHES PAR BYAS TE,

Suppose you are able to find a Lama like the one we have described above. What are the benefits you can expect from following him properly? Simply put, you will win each and every good thing in this and all your future lives. What are the dangers of refusing to follow him, or of following him less than properly? You will undergo a great mass of unendurable pain, in both the short term and the long. You must seek to grasp these facts fully.

RANG RGYUD KYI SKYON SNA GCIG 'GRIB PA DANG , YON TAN SNA GCIG SKYE BA TSUN NAM, ZUNG 'JUG GI GO 'PHANG NAS DGE BA'I BLO SKAD CIG TZAM SKYES PA YAN GYI MDO SNGAGS GNYI GA'I SA LAM GYI YON TAN THAMS CAD 'BYUNG BA'I GZHI'AM RTZA BA LTA BUR GYUR BA NI BLA MA YIN ZHING ,

Your Lama is like the source, he is like the very root, from which every single good quality of all the different levels and paths of both the open and secret teachings spring. If you ever succeed in stopping a single personal fault, it will be because of him. If you ever manage to cultivate a single spiritual quality, any good at all, that too will come from him. The whole range of virtues, from the final attainment of secret Union on down to having a single wholesome thought, all flow from him.

RGYAL BA'I SKU GSUNG THUGS YON TAN 'PHRIN LAS KUN GYI NGO
BO'AM BDAG NYID KYI GZHIR GYUR PA'ANG BLA MA NYID YIN PAR
BSAM PA NI RTZA BA DAD PA SBYANG BA STE,

Your Lama is also the one and only "source" in the sense of being the embodiment or actuality of all the mighty deeds, all the great good, that all the victorious Buddhas perform in their holy actions, words, and thoughts. Try now to develop this root of the path--clear faith in him or her.

RANG GI DAD PA'I NGOS NAS BLA MA LA SANGS RGYAS DNGOS KYI 'DU
SHES BYUNG NA SANGS RGYAS DNGOS KYI BYIN RLABS 'JUG PA 'ONG
BAS, LAM RIM LAS GSUNGS PA LTAR BLA MA SANGS RGYAS SU BLTA
DGOS PA'I RGYU MTSAN, BLTA NUS PA'I RGYU MTSAN, TSUL JI LTAR
BLTA TSUL SOGS LA BLO SBYANG BA GAL CHE,

If with eyes made clear by this faith you begin to see your Lama as a real Buddha, then the blessing of a real Buddha will follow in your mind-stream. It's essential therefore that you train your mind in the relevant parts described in the texts on the Steps: the reasons why you should see that your Lama is a Buddha; the reasons why you can see that your Lama is a Buddha; how to see him, and so on.

DRIN CAN ZHES PAS BKA' DRIN RJES DRAN GYIS GUS PA BSKYED PA
BSTAN, RJE NI, SKAD DOD SVA' MI ZHES PA'I STENG NAS 'GRO BA LHA
DANG BCAS PA'I BTZUG GI NOR BU LTAR GYUR PA LA 'JUG CING ,

The word "kind" in the verse here is meant to convey the Step of building up reverence for your Lama by considering all the kind things he has done for you. The word "Lord" is a translation of the Sanskrit word Svami, a word that applies to someone who is like a crowning jewel which all the beings of the universe, including the great worldly beings of power, humbly place above their heads.

DE TSUL BZHIN BSTEN PA RANG NYID BLA MA'I DBANG DU GTONG BAR
YANG GO DGOS PA SDONG BKOD LAS BYUNG BA'I BU MDZANGS PA LTA
BU'I SEMS SOGS SEMS DGUS BSTEN TSUL GSUNS PA LTAR DANG ,

What does it mean to "follow your Lama properly?" You must understand that it means to surrender yourself completely to him or her. Here you should take yourself to him in the way of an obedient child, and with the rest of the nine attitudes described in the *Arrangement of Trunks*.³⁵

MDOR NA, BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL GYI CHOS SKOR RNAMS NAS JI
SKAD BSHAD PA'I BLANG DOR MTHA' DAG MA NOR BAR BYED PA ZHIG
DGOS SHING , DE LTAR TSUL BZHIN DU BSTEN PAS NI DPER NA, KHANG
PA'I 'GRAM RTZA'AM RTZIG RMANG BRTAN NA KHANG PA BRTAN PO
'ONG BA DANG , SHING GI RTZA BA BRTAN NA YAL GA LO 'BRAS SOGS
'BYUNG BA BZHIN DU

To put it briefly, you must absolutely conduct yourself correctly in this regard; you must follow precisely every one of the classical descriptions of how to find and follow a Lama. If the cornerstone of a house--the walls of its foundation--are solid, then the house itself is solid. If the roots of a tree are planted firmly in the soil, then the branches and fruit and all the rest grow strong.

DAL 'BYOR NAS ZUNG 'JUG BAR GYI LAM YONGS RDZOGS 'BYUNG BA
LA DKA' TSEGS MED PAR LEGS PAR MTHONG BA'I NGES SHES BRTAN PO
RNYED PAR BYAS NAS

What we hope to grow is the path, in its entirety: all the Steps from recognizing the importance of the spiritual leisure and fortune of our present circumstances, on up to the attainment of secret Union itself. We must find sure and solid knowledge, we must see, that taking ourselves to our Lama properly will bring all of this about, without any difficulty at all.

BSHES GNYEN BSAM PAS BSTEN TSUL GYI SKOR RNAMS 'DIR, LEGS PAR
MTHONG NAS ZHES PA 'DIS BSTAN PAS, DGE BA'I BSHES GNYEN LA
SANGS RGYAS DNGOS SU BLTAS TE, SBYOR BA'I BSTEN TSUL,

The entire subject of how to follow your Lama in your thoughts is revealed in the words "first to see." Thus you must come to see your spiritual Friend as a real Buddha; and this brings us to how you should follow him in your actions.

BLA MA MNYES PA'I CHA RNAMS LAM THUN MONG BAR BSHES GNYEN
BSTEN TSUL SPYIR BTANG SKABS GSUNGS PA BZHIN DANG , GSANG
SNGAGS LTAR NA BLA MA LNGA BCU PA NAS BSTAN PA BZHIN DU SGO
GSUM CI NUS KYI DKA' SPYAD LHUR BLANGS NAS, 'BAD PA DU MA
ZHES PAS RNYED PA

How can we please our Lama? Relative to the path which is shared, you should use the instructions found in the discussions on how to find and follow a Lama in general. Relative to the way of the secret Word, use the instructions in the *Fifty Verses on Lamas*.³⁶ Both of these describe how you should, to the very best of your ability, "with all your strength," gladly take up any difficult task in any of the three doors of expression--of body, speech, or mind--in order to please him or her.

ZANG ZING DBUL BA, BKUR STI RIM GRO BYED PA, THOS DON SGRUB PA
LA GZHOL BA BCAS SNGA MA SNGA MA LAS PHYI MA PHYI MA RNAMS
BLA MA'I ZHABS TOG MCHOG YIN PAS,

There are different levels of how we pay homage to our Lama: to offer him or her gifts, material things; to give ourselves up to his service, his honor; and to take what he has taught us and put it into actual practice, accomplishing our spiritual goals. Each of these is higher than the one before it, and the last one is supreme.

BLA MAS CHOS BSTAN PA RNAM LA SGRUB PA SNYING POR BYED PA
SOGS SO SO'I BLO NUS DANG BSTUN TE THABS SNA TSOGS KYIS BSTEN
DGOS TSUL GSUNGS PA YIN LA,

The root text here then is saying that we must take ourselves to our Lama in a whole different number of ways, in keeping with our personal mental capacity.

BSTEN PA'I TSE YANG , ZHING SA LA SA BON 'DEB PA NA, SO NAM GYI
DKA' LAS JI LTAR BYUNG YANG RANG GI DON KHO NA LAS ZHING LA
PHAR DRIN GYIS BSKYANGS PA'I YUS MI BYED PA LTAR, BDAG NYID
THAR PA DANG THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA THOB THABS SU BLANG DOR
BYA DGOS KYANG DA LTA RANG NYID BLANG DOR LA RMONGS PA
LONG BA LTA BUR GYUR PA'I SKABS 'DIR

And as you serve your Lama, remember. When a farmer goes to plant his seeds, whatever work he does in the field, he does for his own sake. It's not as if he is

doing the field a favor. Here I am the same. It's me who hopes to reach freedom from pain, and the state of knowing all things. To do so, I must take up certain things and give up others; but I am like a man who is blind--I am totally ignorant of which of these things are which.

LONG 'KHRID DANG 'DRA BA'I DGE BA'I BSHES GNYEN BSTEN SKABS
KYANG SDIG DANG MA 'DRES PA'I NGAL DUB KYI NGAN LAS JI 'DRA
ZHIG BYED DGOS PA BYUNG YANG GZHAN LA DKA' SPYAD BYAS RABS
KYI YUS MI BDO BAR MA ZAD,

My spiritual Friend is here to lead the blind; and in my service of him or her I am obliged to do anything required of me, no matter how exhausting, no matter how distasteful--so long as nothing morally wrong is involved.

DA DUNG KHUR DU MA SONG BAR RGYAN DU BZUNG STE BDAG SKAL
BA RE BZANG SNYAM DU DAD CING GUS PA CHEN PO'I SGO NAS BSAM
SBYOR GNYIS KYIS TSUL BZHIN BSTEN TE BSGRUB PA DGOS,

And I am not to view this service as if I were laboring for someone else; on the contrary, I should not even see it as a burden, but rather as a reward: it is my great good fortune to have the opportunity. And so I must succeed in serving him or her in both my thoughts and actions, with the deepest feelings of reverence.

DE LTAR BSHES GNYEN BSTEN TSUL 'DI BZANG PO BYUNG NA, TSE RABS
THAMS CAD DU BLA MAS RJES SU 'DZIN PA DANG , DA RES KYI LUS
RTEN 'DI AANG KI DANG POR BRTZIS TE, 'DI NAS BZUNG DAL BRGYAD
'BYOR BCU TSANG BA'I MI'I RTEN BZANG BAR MA CHAD PAR THOB NAS
DAL 'BYOR GYI AANG KI MA 'KHRUGS PAR CHOS NYAMS SU BLANGS TE
SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG SGRUB THUB PA 'ONG ,

If our service of our Lama is good, then in all our future lives we will find ourselves taken under the care of Lamas. Then too we can count the life we have found now as the first in a long and unbroken series of lives in which we enjoy each of the eight spiritual pleasures, and the ten fortunes. And there will never again be any mistake in this particular arithmetic: we will always enjoy the exact number of circumstances needed to follow our practice of the Dharma, and so finally reach the state of perfect enlightenment.

BYIN GYIS RLOBS ZHES PA GZI BYIN SGYUR CES PA STE, RANG RGYUD

SKAD CIG SNGA MA NYON MONGS DANG MTSUNGS LDAN DU SONG
BA'I BLO PHYIN CI LOG TU YOD PA DE SKAD CIG PHYI MAR BLA MA LA
DAD GUS CHEN PO'I SLO NAS TSUL BZHIN DU BR TEN NUS PA DANG ,
LAM YONGS RDZOGS PHYIN CI MA LOG PA RGYUD LA LDAN PA'I SKAL
BA CAN DU SGYUR BAR MDZOD CIG CES GSOL BA BTAB PA STE, 'DI 'OG
MA RNAMS LA'ANG 'GRE GSUNGS,

The words "bless me" here mean "embellish me"; which is to say, "transform the condition of my mind." A minute ago my mind was twisted wrong, and joined with every kind of bad thought. Now, in the very next moment, may I be blessed with the good fortune of being able to find and follow my Lama properly, with every reverence; may my mind be straightened, and become filled with each and every Step of the path. This is the thing I ask, my Lama. The explanation of the words "bless me" here applies as well to each of the other verses in which they appear.

[Notes to Reading Eight

*The presence of an asterisk after a translated proper name indicates that the equivalent Asian-language form or forms may be found in a special appendix.

1 Opening Your Eyes: The edition used for this translation is a woodblock print of 27 folios on handmade Tibetan paper held in the private collection of the venerable Geshe Lobsang Thardo, from the Gyalrong College of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastic University, South India. The copy was presented to him personally by the Third Pabongka Rinpoche, the Ven. Geshe Lobsang Tupten Trinley Kunkyab. Another copy is listed in the catalog to the library of His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, the late tutor of the present Dalai Lama. The text is somewhat rare, and was not included in the standard edition of Pabongka Rinpoche's collected works.

2 the Good and Glorious Pabongka: Refers to the first Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-1941), whose full monk's name was Jampa Tenzin Trinley Gyatso. He was the foremost Buddhist teacher of his era, and renowned for his ability to convey the deepest concepts of Buddhism to the common man in popular public teachings. For a full biography in English, refer to the introduction of *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*.

3 Source of All My Good: Written by Tsongkapa the Great (1357-1419), perhaps the greatest commentator of Buddhism who ever lived, author of some 10,000

pages in explanation of the early classics of Buddhism, and teacher of many eminent disciples, including the First Dalai Lama. This brief work covers all the necessary stages of the entire path to Buddhahood and is often recited at the beginning of important teachings and high secret rituals. It also forms the final section of *Necklace for the Fortunate*, a popular text used in readying oneself for a Buddhist meditation session.

As will be explained in more detail further on, the text of the *Source of All My Good* is found within a longer work, entitled *Open Door to the Highest Path*. This piece is a supplication to the Lamas of the great lineages of Buddhism: the masters through whom concepts such as the Wish for enlightenment, and the vision of emptiness, have been passed down to us. The importance of the Door is indicated by the fact that it appears first in a compendium of 135 briefer titles within the Master's collected works.

The name and role of the work have evolved over the centuries. Je Tsongkapa composed the Door in 1402, and by the time of the famous Path of Ease, a presentation on the Steps of the path by His Holiness the First Panchen Lama (1567?-1662), it is recommended under its original name for a petition and visualization of the lineage Lamas.

By the middle part of the 18th century the *Door's* central section, itself a concise yet complete presentation of the Steps, has become the subject of a number of philosophical commentaries, under the name of the *Source of All My Good* (a phrase taken from the first line of the text). By this time too, the work is being referred to by the name of *Begging for a Mountain of Blessings*. It is also recommended throughout this period as a component in the six standard practices used to prepare for a meditation session.

Other commentaries or works based on the Source include those of the following authors:

Akuching Drungchen Sherab Gyatso (b. 1803)

Gelong Yeshe Gyeltsen Gushri Kachupa Mergen Kenpo Lobsang
Tsepel (b. about 1760)

Gyal Kenpo Drakpa Gyeltsen (1762-1837)

His Holiness the Sixth Panchen Lama, Lobsang Tupten Chukyi
Nyima (1883-1937)

Je Lodro Gyatso (1851-1930), ed. by Gyal Kentrul Kelsang Drakpa
Gyatso (b. 1880)

Jikme Samten (19th century)
Kalka Damtsik Dorje (18th century)
Kirti Lobsang Trinley (1849-1905)
Lumbum Sherab Gyatso (1884-1968)
Ngawang Yeshe Tupten Rabjampa (19th century)
Shangton Tenpa Gyatso Pel Sangpo (n.d.)
Shasana Dipam (n.d.), probably
Tsechokling Yeshe Gyeltsen (1713-1793)

Explanations of the six preliminary practices are also a rich source of commentary upon the *Source*. Pabongka Rinpoche himself gives a profound interpretation of the text in two such works. He includes all the original verses in a recitation text based on the Fifth Dalai Lama's text on the Steps. He also mentions using them as the basis of a review meditation in his masterpiece on the Steps to Buddhahood entitled *A Gift of Liberation, Placed into Our Hands*. And it was his own precious teacher, Dakpo Lama Jampel Hlundrup, who attached the work to the *Necklace* mentioned above.

Other commentaries on the six practices which include explanations of the Source have been written by the following masters:

Akya Yangchen Gaway Lodru (c. 1760)
Keutsang Lobsang Jamyang Monlam (b. 1689)
Tsechok Ling Yeshe Gyeltsen (1713-1793)
The Second Jamyang Shepa, Konchok Jikme Wangpo (1728-1791)

One very interesting additional work is another *Open Door to the Highest Path*, written by Tsechok Ling Yeshe Gyeltsen (1713-1793). The title is the same as that of Je Tsongkapa's original piece because the author undertakes to extend Tsongkapa's supplication to the lineage Lamas, in order to include the great teachers beginning from Je Tsongkapa himself.

Incidentally, the very expression "source of all my good" (in the Tibetan form of *yon-tan gyi gzhi-rten*) is used very early on in Buddhist literature. The phrase in Sanskrit appears in the *Letter to a Friend*, written by the realized being Nagarjuna some seventeen centuries ago. Here it refers to the practice of morality which, like proper reliance upon a Lama, acts to provide us with all good things.

4 *Three doors*: The three ways in which one can express himself--in action, speech, or thought. A typical presentation of the three appears in the works on Higher

Knowledge (*Abhidharma*); see for example Chone Lama Drakpa Shedrup (1675-1748).

5 *The person who is the Essence of Great Bliss*: Another name for Pabongka Rinpoche, describing his mastery of the secret teachings of Buddhism. The additional names that follow indicate that the Rinpoche embodies Je Tsongkapa, Shakyamuni Buddha, and the form that Lord Buddha takes to deliver the secret Word.

6 *Mountain of Blessings*: The concept of a blessing in Buddhism refers to a specific process through which a disciple's ability to achieve spiritual goals is altered, enhanced, through a true request to a Lama for his or her blessing. Pabongka Rinpoche himself describes this in his famed *Gift of Liberation*.

7 *"Language of pleasure beings..."* These and the other lines belong to selected verses which recited by tradition at the start of a major teaching, in order for both teacher and listener to begin with the proper motivation; to formally request the teaching; to prevent obstacles that might disrupt the teaching; and so on.

The verses can be found in standard prayer books for Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. Their locations here are as follows: *Essence of Wisdom* (the famous *Heart Sutra*, for preventing obstacles); *Angel with the Face of a Lion* (also for preventing obstacles); "Virtues perfected" (opening lines of Je Tsongkapa's brief *Stages of the Path* and an obeisance to Lord Buddha); "Loving One" (these and following common verses of obeisance and the offering of bathing to the lineage Lamas); "Gentle Voice,"; "The one of great compassion,"; "Teaching what to learn, to reach,"; "Founder from the Land of Snows,"; "All three places" (these last two also common graces); "The constellations,"; "In all my lives" (also attached to the *Mountain of Blessings*); "The great Earth" (the shorter offering of the mandala); "Atop a lion throne" (from a prayer of devotion to Je Tsongkapa); "Sponges of the sky" (a request for teaching from the famous Offering to Lamas); "Idam guru" (final words of the mandala offering); "To the Buddha" (the well-known formula for taking refuge and developing the wish for enlightenment); "Pleasure beings" (an obeisance to Tara, the Angel of Liberation); and "Language of pleasure beings" (a prayer to teach in all the world's languages.)

8 *This life of spiritual leisure*: Found in the Master's *Songs of My Spiritual Life*.

9 *Four forces*: Buddhism teaches that there are four antidote forces, which together can remove the power or karma of any bad deed. The "basis" force

consists of thinking who it is that was offended by your deed, and who it is you will rely on to clear yourself of it. The "destruction" force is an intense feeling of shame and regret for the deed, which will certainly return to hurt you. The "reverse" force is to turn yourself away from doing that kind of deed again. The "counteragent" force is to undertake some spiritual practice--confession, meditation, or any good deed--to offset the power of the wrong.

10 *Three extraordinary trainings*: That is, extraordinary morality, extraordinary concentration, and extraordinary wisdom. Each one acts as a support for the next. A thorough discussion of the three is found in the monastic textbooks on the perfection of wisdom; see for example the "Overview of the Perfection of Wisdom" by Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568).

11 *Even a cow knows how*: The quotation is from the *Letter to a Student*, written in the tenth century. It appears as well in Je Tsongkapa's *greater Steps to the Path* and the first Panchen Lama's *Path of Ease*.

12 *The sea is not my problem*: The quotation is found in a teaching of the Buddha, where he recounts the story of a serpentine king, as an admonition to his monks for quarreling. The popular lines are also found in the *Greater Steps* of Je Tsongkapa; the *Path of Ease* by the First Panchen Lama (1567?-1662); the *Word of Gentle Voice* by the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682); and the *Steps of the Teaching*, a massive prototype for the *Greater Steps* composed by Geshe Drolungpa (c. 1100).

13 *A kindness returned*: This appears to be a proverb rather than a scriptural reference; the *Steps of the Teaching* expresses a very similar sentiment.

14 *Both of the ultimate goals*: Refers to the final culmination of one's own goals and the ability to help others achieve theirs--two qualities possessed only by a Buddha. Several important discussions of the ultimate goals are found in treatises on Master Dharmakirti's *Commentary on Valid Perception*, composed in the 7th century. The first is included in the explanation of the opening lines of this work itself, where the Buddha's qualities are extolled. The second comes in the second chapter, as Master Dharmakirti explains the praise of the Buddha in Master Dignaga's original treatise.

15 *one of those foe destroyers*: "Foe destroyer" is a term used to refer to those who have achieved nirvana, since--as Geshe Drolungpa notes in his *Steps of the Teaching*--they have permanently destroyed the foe of the mental afflictions. "Listeners" and "self-made Buddhas" here refer to persons who have achieved

nirvana but have not yet entered the higher way, the way of the bodhisattvas, where they work to become fully enlightened Buddhas in order to liberate all living beings.

"Listeners" are so called because they can listen to the teachings of the higher way, and even relate them to others, but do not actually put them into practice themselves. "Self-made buddhas" are not real Buddhas, but have only achieved nirvana, and are "self-made" only insofar as they have reached this state without relying on a spiritual teacher in the present life, although they have had countless such teachers in their past lives.

16 *The great monastery of Radreng*: The chain of events surrounding the composition of the Mountain of Blessings are extraordinary; they show how this brief supplication played a pivotal role in Je Tsongkapa's spiritual life, and in the history of Buddhist literature. Much of what Je Tsongkapa wrote is said to have been dictated to him by Manjushri, Gentle Voice, who is the wisdom of all enlightened beings combined in the form of a single angel. Je Tsongkapa began to enjoy communication with Gentle Voice in his early thirties. At this point he was still incapable of seeing the angel directly himself, but was able to pose questions to him through a mediator, a lama named Umapa. Je Tsongkapa's Secret Biography, a work by his close disciple Kedrup Je (1385- 1438), describes important events of the Master's inner life. Here we read the details of an early exchange between Je Tsongkapa and Gentle Voice, with Lama Umapa acting as go-between. Je Rinpoche poses questions, and the angel begins his answer by clarifying a whole range of thorny issues concerning the subject of emptiness. Next he moves on to illuminate a number of difficult points in the secret teachings. Then he pauses, and Je Rinpoche says: "But wait, there are still more questions I must ask, more points I cannot grasp."

And Gentle Voice replies,

Do not forget the answers I have already given you today. Go now and write a record of them. There are three practices then you must undertake, all three together, and you must devote yourself to them with an unquenchable passion.

First you must come to see that your Lama and your high secret Angel are one and the same. You must make supplication to them, and try to reach them.

Secondly you must make constant and perfect efforts in the two-fold practice of collecting the energy of good deeds, and purifying yourself of the force of evil deeds.

Thirdly you must use the power of your intellect to investigate the true meaning of the great books of Buddhism, and then you must contemplate this meaning deeply.

Follow these three practices, keep them up over a long period of time. There will come a day, it is not far off, when the seed I have planted within you in this hour will flower. And then you will understand all, perfectly.

Throughout his life Je Tsongkapa followed all three practices, but the particular attention he paid to supplication, to prayers for the blessings of perfected beings, Buddhas and Lamas, is strikingly evident in records of his writings, and throughout his various biographies.

It is one such supplication which leads to our present work, the *Mountain of Blessings*. The time is the summer of 1402, in the forty-sixth year of the Master's life. Having spent a fruitful summer at the Temple of Ar with his close teacher and disciple, the Sakya sage Jetsun Rendawa, Je Tsongkapa then travels to Radreng ("to the north" of Lhasa). He has been there once before, attracted to the great monastery so full of the history of two of Tibetan Buddhism's founding fathers: Atisha, the Lord, and his spiritual son Dromton Je (the "Victor" mentioned in the text). This connection is described by Kedrup Je in his longer biography.

At Radreng, Je Tsongkapa goes into solitude at the foot of the lion crag. Above his quarters is a statue of the Lord himself, Atisha. One day the Master kneels before the image, in keeping with the words of Gentle Voice himself, and makes a supplication to the Lamas of the past.

The prayer that Je Tsongkapa made that day is still extant, and can be found in his collected works under the name of *Door to the Highest Path*. The petition is directed to the Lamas of the instructions on the Steps to Buddhahood, and

divides broadly into three parts.

The first part is a request to the teachers of the lineage of the Wish for enlightenment, beginning with the Buddha himself, and continuing on through Loving One, the Indian master Asanga, and then on down to the great Tibetan lamas of Je Rinpoche's own time. The third part is a similar prayer, to the teachers of the lineage of the Realization of emptiness, again starting with Lord Buddha, and passing down through Gentle Voice, the incomparable Nagarjuna, and later generations. The second part, between these two, is none other than the *Mountain of Blessings*, the *Source of All My Good*.

Je Tsongkapa ends his prayer, and suddenly goes into a vision, one which, according to the *Great Biography* of Gyalwang Lobsang Trinley Namgyal (about 1830), continues on and off for an entire month. He sees all the lineage Lamas face-to-face, and receives a momentous boon from one in particular.

The scene is recorded in a standard set of fifteen scroll paintings of the Master's life known as *The Tsongkapa Eighty*. We find the following description of the event on the scroll in the works of the great Jamyang Shepay Dorje (1648-1721):

And the Lord Atisha came to the Master, and placed his hand on his head, and said to him, "Do mighty deeds on behalf of the Teachings, and then I myself will assist you in reaching the goal of Enlightenment, and filling the needs of every sentient being."

Immediately after the vision, Je Tsongkapa is approached by scores of learned disciples, who entreat him to write a detailed account of how to reach perfection. Flush with Lord Atisha's promise, the Master goes into retreat, and there at Radreng completes his masterwork--the Lam Rim Chenmo, or *Greater Steps of the Path to Buddhahood*--the most famous book in all of Tibetan Buddhism.

His understanding is now complete, and the seed planted by Gentle Voice has flowered as foretold, for Je Tsongkapa has heeded the angel's advice by composing this perfect supplication: the *Mountain of Blessings*. This power of the prayer has been recognized throughout generations of lamas since, and explains why it is used as a preparation for the secret practices. As the final lines of the present explanation of the work reveal, it too has been imparted by Pabongka Rinpoche as a preliminary to a tantric initiation.

17 *Both the highest paths*: Refers to the paths of the open and the secret teachings of Buddhism. The path which is "shared" by the two consists of the realizations of the Steps to Buddhahood, since these are necessary for success in both the open and the secret ways. The quotation is from Je Rinpoche's *Briefer Steps of the Path*.

18 *You will only lose yourself*: Original source of quotation not found. The Fifth Dalai Lama, His Holiness Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617-1682), was an extraordinary scholar and organizer of Buddhism, so much so that he is referred to in Tibet simply as the "Great Fifth." He is known for bringing the famous Potala Palace to its present form; for his writings on a broad range of philosophical and secular subjects; and for his special visions and mastery of the secret teachings.

19 *Nothing is not a teaching*: The line is found in a work entitled *Selections from Dromton Je*, which at this point is quoting single lines by Dromton Je that appear in the *Greater Steps* of Je Tsongkapa. Here and in the *Gift* of Pabongka Rinpoche the quotation is used to emphasize how practitioners at an advanced level see all the Buddhist teachings as being totally consistent internally. None of these three occurrences of the line includes the part beginning with "for the Father," nor is it found in the quotation as found in the text on the Steps by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama. The sense though matches the context of the *Selections* and the standard use of the reference.

The words translated here as "wrapping the totality of the teachings into one" can be read in a number of different ways, as noted by Pabongka Rinpoche himself in the *Gift*," at the folios listed above. Literally the text speaks of "carrying all the teachings as a square," which the Rinpoche interprets finally as referring to how a square Tibetan carpet automatically comes with four corners. That is, any teaching on the Steps of the path automatically contains in it all the teachings of the Buddha, providing an abbreviated presentation that any one of us can use to achieve total enlightenment.

The great Drom Tonpa (1005-1064), full name Dromton Gyalway Jungne, was the most famed disciple of Lord Atisha (982-1052), himself the illustrious progenitor of the teaching on the Steps in Tibet. Drom Tonpa also founded the great monastery of Radreng, which is where Je Tsongkapa wrote the *Mountain of Blessings*.

20 *A gold and jewel rosary*: Original source of quotation not found; it also occurs

in Pabongka Rinpoche's commentary to the *Three Principal Paths*.

The "three scopes" refer to three levels of motivation for practicing the Steps of the path: to escape the three lower rebirths, to escape all suffering, and to achieve total enlightenment in order to help all living beings. The "three collections" are the three sections of the Buddha's word: the "collection of vowed morality," dedicated chiefly to the training of morality; the "collection of sutra," concerned primarily with the training of concentration; and the "collection of higher knowledge," devoted to the training of wisdom. See Pabongka Rinpoche's *Gift of Liberation*, and Kedrup Tenpa Dargye's *Overview of the Perfection of Wisdom*.

The "Keepers" are explained below at note 29.

21 *These Steps are far superior*: Pabongka Rinpoche himself, in *A Gift of Liberation*, describes the "three extraordinary qualities" as follows. The works on the Steps to the path are (1) totally complete, with nothing left out, for they present in a concise way the entire contents of the teachings of the Buddha, both open and secret. They are (2) easily put into practice, for their main point is to explain the various steps for taming the mind. Finally, they are (3) vastly superior to other teachings, since they consist of the systems of the two great founders—Arya Nagarjuna and Master Asanga—enhanced by the instructions of Lama Vidyakokila and Lama Serlingpa, respectively.

Arya Nagarjuna (200 AD) is known as the founder of the teachings on emptiness, and Master Asanga (350 AD) as that of the teachings on bodhisattva activities. The lineages come down respectively to Lama Vidyakokila and Lama Serlingpa, and then combine in their illustrious student, Lord Atisha (982-1054). The Lord's full name is Dipamkara Shri Jnyana; it was he who brought the teachings of the Steps of the path to Tibet, and who authored the *Lamp for the Path*, a prototype text of this genre.

The "four kinds of greatness" also appear in Pabongka Rinpoche's *Gift*. The teachings on the Steps of the path are great in that (1) they allow a person to realize that every single teaching of Buddhism is consistent with every other one. They bring a person to a level where (2) he or she sees everything the Buddha taught as something that can be put into personal practice. They (3) help a person to discern with ease the true intention of the Buddha in each of his teachings, and thereby (4) automatically protect you from making the Great Mistake; that is, the error of thinking that some of the Buddha's instructions are

better, and some worse.

22 *Massive stores of the Dharma*: By tradition the Buddha taught 84,000 huge collections of scripture, one collection for each of the different variants of our mental afflictions and harmful habits. There are a number of different positions on the exact quantity of the teachings contained in each of these collections; the view of the greater way is that each such collection consists of the number of pages one could write with the amount of ink that the great mythical elephant named Rabten could carry on his back. See the First Dalai Lama's commentary to the *Treasure House of Knowledge*.

23 *It is this perfection*: The verse is found in the *Shorter Sutra on the Perfection of Wisdom*. It is generally considered the ultimate origin of the expression "Steps of the path", and is quoted by Je Tsongkapa in his *Greater Steps*, as well as in Pabongka Rinpoche's own masterpiece on the Steps, and commentary to the *Three Principal Paths*.

24 *The five great classics*: These are the five great books of early Indian Buddhism studied and debated in major Tibetan monasteries even in Je Tsongkapa's time. As mentioned throughout his *Great Biography*, they are the *Jewel of Realizations* brought from Loving One by Master Asanga (335 AD); *Entering the Middle Way*, by Master Chandrakirti (650 AD); *Treasure House of Knowledge*, by Master Vasubandhu (335 AD); *Abbreviation of Vowed Morality*, by Master Gunaprabha (500 AD?); and *Commentary on Valid Perception*, by Master Dharmakirti (630 AD).

25 *Swept away on the wind*: Original source of quotation not found. The "Great Fifth", as mentioned above in note 18, refers to His Holiness the Fifth Dalai Lama.

26 *Especially the magic body*: The Master Translator of Taktsang, Sherab Rinchen (b. 1405), was one of the foremost scholars of the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The lines appear as well in Pabongka Rinpoche's *Gift of Liberation*, and in the famed *Survey of the Schools of Philosophy* by Tuken Lobsang Chukyi Nyima (1737-1802).

The lines beginning from "diamond way" refer to the secret teachings of Buddhism.

27 *Ever faultlessly*: Mikyu Dorje (1507-1554) was the Eighth Karmapa, spiritual

head of the Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, and wrote on a wide range of topics.

28 *It is a pure tradition*: Gyalwang Kelsang Gyatso (1708-1757) was the Seventh of the Dalai Lamas. The lines quoted here appear among a group of mental trainings found in his collected works.

29 *The older Keepers of the Word*: Refers to the Kadampas, an inspired group of scholars and meditators from the early days of Buddhism in Tibet, dating from the eleventh century. Their name literally means "those for whom every single letter of the teachings (*ka*) turns to instructions (*dampa*) immediately relevant to personal practice." The followers of the tradition of Tsongkapa—the *Gelukpa* or Way of Virtue, lineage of the Heaven of Bliss—are sometimes called the "later Keepers of the Word."

30 *The great completion*: This and some of the other practices mentioned are all details of the secret teachings of Buddhism.

31 *Perfect yourself*: Original quotation not found; neither does it appear to be in the secret teachings of *Samputa*, despite the similarity of the title.

32 *Ask Him, for all your goals*: The lines are found in a letter of advice from Je Tsongkapa to one Yonten Gyatso of the district of Tulung, Tibet.

33 *All three of the trainings*: These are the exceptional trainings of morality, concentration, and wisdom. The original quotation is from the *Jewel of Maitreya*. The importance of the qualifications of the Lama is indicated by the fact that the same words are quoted in works like the *Greater Steps* of Je Tsongkapa; the First Panchen Lama's *Path of Ease*; Pabongka Rinpoche's own *Gift of Liberation*, and his commentary to the *Three Principal Paths*.

34 *The good begins to flower*: The lines are found in an extraordinary letter of advice written by Je Tsongkapa to himself, where he poses numbered questions, and then answers them in the form of profound instruction. It is interesting to note that this is the final work in a large collection of shorter pieces by the Master; the first title is the *Mountain of Blessings* itself, which brings us full circle.

35 *The nine attitudes*: The nine are mentioned in Je Tsongkapa's *Greater Steps*, and are listed fully in the First Panchen Lama's *Path of Ease*. The original sutra

subsumes two volumes of the canon and includes repeated, exquisite descriptions of these and similar attitudes to develop towards one's Lama.

The nine attitudes taught in the sutra are as follows:

- 1) Like an obedient child, give up your own will and submit yourself to your Lama.
- 2) Like a diamond, be solid in your devotion to Him or Her, and let no relative or friend come between you.
- 3) Like the earth itself, accept any task your Lama may load upon you.
- 4) Like the great mountains at the edge of the world, stay unshakable in your service, regardless of any troubles that come.
- 5) Like a handservant, carry out any task He or She gives you, never seeking to avoid it, no matter how distasteful it may seem.
- 6) Like the dust of the earth, seek the lowest position, giving up all pride, all pretension, all conceit.
- 7) Like a sturdy vehicle, undertake any burden your Lama may give you, however heavy.
- 8) Like a loyal dog, stay without anger, regardless of how your Lama might berate or scold you.
- 9) No matter how much you have to go here and there in the service of your Lama, be willing to go, like a boat that never complains.

36 Fifty Verses on Lamas: A classic description of Lama devotion written by the Indian Buddhist master Ashvagosha, circa 100 AD.

GNYIS PA BSTEN NAS BLO JI LTAR SBYANG BA'I TSUL LA GNYIS, DAL
'BYOR LA SNYING PO BLANG BA'I PHYIR BSKUL BA DANG , SNYING PO JI
LTAR LEN PA'I TSUL LO, DANG PO NI,

This brings us to the second major part of the text itself, which describes how to train the mind, once you have properly taken a Lama. This part comes in two Steps: urgent advice to take the essence of the present life, with its spiritual leisure and fortune; and a description of just how to take this essence. The first step is contained in the single verse that follows next:

,LAN CIG RNYED PA'I DAL BA'I RTEN BZANG 'DI, ,SHIN TU RNYED DKA'

DON CHEN SHES GYUR NAS, ,NYIN MTSAN KUN TU SNYING PO LEN PA'I
BLO, ,RGYUN CHAD MED PAR SKYE BAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS, ,ZHES PA'I
{SHI}OO KA GCIG STE,

(2)

**Bless me first to realize
That the excellent life
Of leisure I've found
Just this once
Is ever so hard to find
And ever so valuable;**

**Grant me then
To wish, and never stop to wish,
That I could take
Its essence night and day.**

LAN CIG RNYED CES PA PHYIN CHAD YANG YANG MI RNYED PA'I DON
DANG ,

The phrase about finding a life like this "just this once" is meant to indicate that we would never be able to find this kind of life on a regular basis in the future.

'DIR DAL 'BYOR NGOS BZUNG BA'I SKABS, DAL 'BYOR RTEN ZHES MA
GSUNGS BAR DAL BA'I RTEN ZHES GSUNGS PA'I RGYU MTSAN, NGAN
SONG GSUM DANG LHA TSE RING PO, KLA KLO, LOG LTA CAN, LKUG
PA, RGYAL BA 'JIG RTEN DU MA BYON PA'I DUS SU SKYES PA STE MI
KHOM PA BRGYAD DANG BRAL BA'I DAL BA BRGYAD DNGOS SU TSANG
LA,

You may wonder too why, at a point where the concepts of spiritual leisure and fortune are being presented, the verse says only "life of leisure," and not "life of leisure and fortune." The point is that we actually do possess the entire set of eight spiritual leisures, which consist of being free of the eight ways that a person can lack opportunity. These lacks of opportunity are birth in the three lower realms,³⁷ or as a long-life being of pleasure; as a barbarian; as a person with a mistaken worldview; as someone who is handicapped; or in a period of history when the victorious Buddha has yet to appear in the world.

,MI NYID DBUS SKYES DBANG PO TSANG , ,LAS MTHA' MA LOG GNAS LA DAD,

We do have all five of the spiritual fortunes that relate to one's self, as described in the following verse:

Born as a human,
In a central land,
And having one's faculties
All complete;
Not lost to the last of karma,
And feeling faith for the place.³⁸

,CES PA LTAR DGE SLONG PHA MA, DGE BSNYEN PHA MA BCAS STON PA'I 'KHOR RNAM BZHI'AM, GTZO BO DGE SLONG PHA YOD PA'I CHOS TSIGS KYI YUL DBUS SU SKYES SHING ,

Here "born in a central land" refers to a land where there exists the "core of the Dharma," meaning that there are people in the country who keep the vows of the "four attendants to the Buddha." This refers to the full ordinations for a man and a woman, along with the novice ordinations for the same. The main component of the core is the fully ordained monk.

LAS MTHA' MA LOG PA STE TSE 'DIR MTSAMS MED KYI LAS BSAGS LA MA SBYANGS PA MIN PA DANG ,

"Not lost to the last of karma" means not having collected, and then failed to clear from oneself, the karma that comes from committing one of the "immediate," heinous bad deeds.³⁹

DKAR PO'I CHOS KUN SKYE BA'I GNAS 'DUL BA STE, RANG RGYUD 'DUL PHYIR 'DUL BA'I SGRAS BTAGS PA SDE SNOD GSUM LA DAD PA SOGS RANG 'BYOR LNGA KA TSANG BA YOD KYANG ,

The *place* from where each and every white and good thing grows is the teaching on discipline; here the word "discipline" can by extension be applied to the entire contents of the canon--the three collections of scripture--since they all function to discipline one's mind.⁴⁰ We do then possess the fortune of having faith in the holy books.

,SANG RGYAS BYON DANG DAM CHOS STON, ,BSTAN PA GNAS DANG
DE RJES 'JUG,GZHAN PHYIR SNYING NI BRTZE BA'O, ,ZHES PA'I GZHAN
'BYOR LNGA NAS,

Let us examine though whether we have the five fortunes that relate to what is
outside ourselves. The classic reference here is:

The Buddha is come,
And taught the holy Dharma.
The teaching remains,
As do the ones who follow.
There is compassion
For the sake of others.⁴¹

SANGS RGYAS BYON TE BZHUGS BZHIN PA DANG , SANGS RGYAS SAM
DE'I NYAN THOS KYIS CHOS GSUNGS PA, SANGS RGYAS MYA NGAN LAS
MA 'DAS PAR 'BRAS BU'I BSTAN PA GNAS PA, CHOS BSTAN PA DES 'BRAS
BU BZHI DNGOS SU THOB PAR MTHONG NAS GDUL BYA GZHAN
MA'ANG DE'I RJES SU 'JUG PA

Here the Buddha must have come and still be present in the world. He or his
direct disciples must be teaching the Dharma. The resulting teachings must also
remain, and this during the period before his final passing beyond all sorrow.
Certain of his disciples must observe other disciples actually achieve the four
results,⁴² after he has taught them; and these disciples must undertake to follow
the same practices too.

BZHI DGE SLONG 'CHAR KA LTA BU LA TSANG BA LAS, MGON PO KLU
SGRUB LA'ANG DNGOS GNAS PA MTSANG LA, RANG RES KYANG SANGS
RGYAS DANG KHYAD MED PA'I BLA MA MJAL TE CHOS GSUNGS PA
SOGS KYIS DE DAG DOD THUB SBYOR DU YOD PA LAS DNGOS GNAS MA
TSANG YANG , DAL BA BRGYAD DNGOS SU TSANG BA LA GTZO BOR
DGONGS TE GSUNGS PA RED,

All four of the fortunes just explained have been possessed even by the likes of
the monk Udayi,⁴³ whereas the same cannot be said even for the Savior
Nagarjuna, who lacked them in their literal form. We too have met our Lamas,
who are no different from a Buddha, and they have spoken the Dharma and so
on; these are a full substitute yes, but we cannot say that we have all those
fortunes in their literal form. We do however enjoy all eight of the spiritual

leisures; these then are our primary advantage, and it's with this fact in mind that the verse reads "life of leisure."

GZHAN PHYIR SNYING BRTZE ZHES PA, SBYIN BDAG DANG BLA MA
SOGS KYIS GANG ZAG GZHAN RANG NYID KYI PHYIR DU SNYING BRTZE
BAS CHOS KYI MTHUN RKYEN ZAS GOS SOGS STER BA'AM, CHOS STON
PA SOGS TE, RANG GIS CHOS SGRUB PA'I MTHUN RKYEN SBYIN MKHAN
YOD PA LA BYA DGOS,

What does it mean when the reference says, "There is compassion for the sake of others?" The "others" here refers to ourselves; our sponsors and Lamas and other such persons who act for our sake, motivated by compassion, to see that we are provided with all the conditions that will facilitate our practice of the Dharma: they give us food, or clothes, and other necessities; They teach us the Dharma; and so on. Therefore this phrase should be understood as describing the good fortune to have around us those who give us the things we need to practice.

RANG CAG MI KHOM PA BRGYAD DANG BRAL NAS CHOS SGRUB TU
YOD PA'I DUS 'DIR MI SGRUB PAR, TSE 'DI PA'I 'CHING THAG GIS BCINGS
TE, RNYED BKUR SNYAN GRAGS DANG , 'JIG RTEN MTHUN 'JUG SGRUB
PA SOGS DON MIN GYI LAS MANG PO BRTZAM STE BREL BA BYED PA 'DI,
MI KHOM PA DGU PA ZHIG CHED DU BTZAL BA YIN ZHING ,

So you and I are free of the eight ways in which a person can lack spiritual opportunity; and yet we fail to work here now, in the days when we do have a Dharma to practice. We find ourselves locked in the handcuffs of the present life; we throw ourselves into all sorts of meaningless activities aimed at gaining material things, or other people's approval, or a taste of fame; we want to fit into the world's way of life, and so on. These make us so busy that it's almost as if we have taken special care to invent a ninth way of lacking spiritual opportunity.

SNGAR GYI DAM PA TSOS SANGS RGYAS SGRUB PAR MDZAD PA'I RTEN
BZANG 'DI LTA BU RANG RES SDIG PA BSAGS PA'I SNOD DU BKOL NA,
DAL 'BYOR 'DI SDUG 'BYOR DU SONG BA YIN PAS,

We have here a wonderful life and body of exactly the same kind that holy persons in the past have used to achieve enlightenment itself; we though use these things as a big pot in which to stock up our bad deeds. We have turned our spiritual leisure and fortune into a rich opportunity to suffer.

SLAN CHAD DE LTAR MA SHOR BAR DA RES MTHUN RKYEN MA TSANG
BA MED PA 'DZOMS PA'I RTEN BZANG LAN CIG TZAM RNYED PA 'DI LA
SNYING PO KHYAD PAR CAN LON PA ZHIG MA BYUNG NA, PHYIS NAS
DAL 'BYOR GYI LUS RTEN RNYED PAR SHIN TU DKA',

In order not to lose the good qualities of this life in our future lives, we must manage to take some special essence of the circumstances we have found, just this once; we must use this life-time where everything has come together, where there is not a single piece of the whole incomplete. If we fail in this endeavor, then it will be extremely difficult for us to find a life of spiritual leisure and fortune ever again.

DE RNYED MI RNYED DA LTA RANG LA DAL 'BYOR GYI RGYU TSANG MA
TSANG BLTA BA LAS, MI MANG NYUNG LA BLTAS PAS MI PHAN TE,
'GRO BA RIGS DRUG NAS GCIG MI YIN PAS 'KHOR BA'I SEMS CAN RIGS
DRUG PO MA ZAD BAR DU MI YANG RDZOGS MTHA' MED PAR MANG
PO DE GA RANG 'ONG LA, DAL 'BYOR MA TSANG NA MI MANG YANG
SDIG PA MI DGE BA BSAG STOBS CHE BAS 'KHOR BA'I ZONG RTEN MANG
BA LA DGA' RGYU MED GSUNGS,

Whether you will be able to gain such a life again or not you must judge from looking within yourself, to see if all the causes of winning the various leisures and fortunes are there, or not. It's no use to look outside, to see whether or not there are a lot of human beings around. Humans are one of the six forms of suffering life, and until all six disappear you will see no end to humans. There will always be some good number around, but if they lack this complement of leisure and fortune, a big population will only mean an even more tremendous amassing of sins. You should take no comfort, said our Lama, in the fact that there is such an abundant supply of raw material for the circle of suffering life.

'O NA DAL 'BYOR GYI RGYU JI 'DRA DGOS SHE NA, DAL RTEN RNAM
DAG THOB PA'I RGYU LA TSUL KHRIMS RNAM PAR DAG PAS GZHI
BZUNG , SBYIN SOGS DRUG GIS GROGS BYAS, SMON LAM DRI MA MED
PAS MTSAMS SPYAR BA BCAS DGOS PAS RGYU'I SGO NAS RNYED DKA'
BA DANG ,

"Well then," you may ask, "just what is it that causes the leisures and fortunes to come about?" Attaining the good life, one of spiritual leisure, begins with morals kept very good. This morality must be joined with giving and the other five perfections; and the glue that holds it all together is to make the very purest of

prayers. Therefore finding a life like ours is first of all something difficult because of the causes needed to bring it about.

RANG CAG GIS SDIG PA MI DGE BA LA DUS RTAG TU SPYAD PA 'DI
YANG DAL 'BYOR 'THOB PA'I GEGS THU SHOS SHIG YIN PAR MA ZAD,
'DUL BA LUNG GZHI SOGS NAS GSUNGS PA BZHIN NGAN 'GRO GZHAN
LAS DUD 'GRO NYUNG , DE LAS MI'I 'GRO BA NYUNG , MI YANG SANGS
RGYAS KYI STAN PA DAR BA'I YUL DU SKYE BA NYUNG ,

People like you and I are forever committing non-virtuous deeds, and this is the single greatest obstacle to our reaching the state of spiritual leisure and fortune ever again. Beyond this are statements from the *Foundation Word on Vowed Morality*, and other texts, which describe how those born as animals are fewer than those born in one of the other births of misery; those born as humans are fewer than the animals; and even among humans those born in a country where the Buddha's teachings have spread are fewer still.⁴⁴

DE SKYES KYANG CHOS DANG MJAL BA'I RTEN BZANG KHYAD PAR
CAN NI RNYED MI SRID PA LTA BU YIN PAS NA, NGO BO'I SGO NAS
RNYED DKA',

To be born in such a land, and then go on to actually encounter the Dharma with a mind and body so very special as the one which we now possess, is an occurrence which borders on the impossible. This shows how a life like ours is difficult to find by its very nature as well.

BSHES SPRING LAS, ,RGYA MTSO CHER G-YENGS GNYA' SHING BU GA
DANG , ,RUS SBAL PHRAD PA BAS KYANG DUD 'GRO LAS, ,MI NYID CHES
THOB DKA' BAS MI DBANG GIS, ,DAM CHOS SPYAD PAS DE 'BRAS MCHIS
PAR MDZOD, ,CES SOGS LTAR DPE'I SGO NAS KYANG RNYED DKA' BAS,

There is yet a third way to show how difficult it is to find a life so opportune as our own. This involves using a metaphor, such as the following from the Letter to a Friend:

Suppose a turtle in the sea were to rise
And poke his head right through the hole
Of a wooden ring as it drifted around
The surface of the great salt sea.
The odds of being born a human

As opposed to birth as an animal
Are even more remote; make it come,
Lord of Men, by living holy Dharma.⁴⁵

DA RES CHOS SGRUB PAR KHOM ZHING , PHYI' RKYEN BLA MA DGE
BA'I BSHES GNYEN SANGS RGYAS DNGOS LTA BU DANG PHRAD, NANG
GI RKYEN SHES PA LA SKYON MA ZHUGS SHING THOS BSAM SGOM
GSUM BYAR RUNG BA'I SHES RAB DANG LDAN,

Right now we have the time to practice religion. We possess the outer condition we need to succeed, for we have come into contact with a Lama, a spiritual Friend who is just like Lord Buddha himself. We also enjoy the inner condition, since our minds are not defective in any way, and we are endowed with the intelligence required to advance through the stages of learning, contemplation, and meditation.

RANG GIS SGRUB PAR BYED NA GNAS SKABS MNGON MTHO LHA MI'I
RTEN BZANG NAS MTHAR THUG RDO RJE 'CHANG GI GO 'PHANG MAN
CHAD NGES PAR SGRUB NUS PA'I RTEN BZANG KHYAD PAR CAN
RNYED PA 'DI NYID DON CHEN PO DANG LDAN PAR SHES SHING NGO
'PHROD PAR GYUR NAS,

If I truly undertake to do so, it is certain that I can achieve everything from temporal goals, such as achieving a good and useful kind of birth in the higher forms of life--among humans or the beings of pleasure--on up to the ultimate goal of becoming the Keeper of the Diamond himself.⁴⁶

All this can be achieved because of the extraordinary kind of life I have now gained; seek to understand this fact, try to truly recognize how significant the one chance is.

DPER NA SEMS LA DGA' BA DANG , SDUG BSNAL CHEN PO YOD PA'I MI
DES MTSAN MOR GNYID SAD RES KYANG DGA' SDUG DE DANG DE
LHANG LHANG DU 'BYUNG BA BZHIN DAL 'BYOR NGOS ZIN PA'I LAG
RJES SU,

Certain signs will come if you succeed in making yourself aware of your spiritual leisure and fortune. Think of a man who is completely engrossed, either in some great good luck, or in some great misfortune. Every time he wakes up at night these thoughts of happiness or unhappiness well up in him, vivid and automatic.

RNYED PAR DKA' ZHING RNYED NA DON CHE BA'I DAL 'BYOR TSANG
BA'I RDO RJE'I LUS RTEN 'DI LTA BUD RES THENGS GCIG TZAM RNYED
PA'I SKABS 'DIR 'KHOR BA MTHA' MED KYI NGANG TSUL DANG , SANGS
RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG BSKAL PA MANG POR SGRUB DGOS LUGS SOGS
BSAMS NAS, NYIN MTSAN BAR MA CHAD PAR GNAS SKABS KUN TU
DON MED STONG LOG TU MA SHOR BAR SNYING PO LEN 'DOD KYI BLO
RGYUN CHAD MED PAR SKYE BAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS SHIG CES GSOL BA
BTAB PA YIN,

What we are requesting from our Lama here is that he bless us to achieve this same level of obsession: *bless me first to realize that the excellent life I've found, complete with every spiritual leisure, is hard to find and—once found—is ever so valuable.* Now, in the one and only time I have ever managed to win this diamond body and life, let me think of how the circle of suffering has absolutely no beginning; how one must normally practice for many millions of years to reach the state of a Buddha; and other such truths. And *grant me then to wish, and never stop to wish, that I could take this life's essence night and day:* that I could at every given moment keep this precious time from being lost to actions which are pointless, devoid of any meaning.

STEPS SHARED WITH THOSE OF LESSER CAPACITY

IV. Steps Shared with Those of Lesser Capacity

GNYSIS PA SNYING PO JI LTAR LEN PA'I TSUL LA GSUM LAS, DANG PO
SKYES BU CHUNG DU DANG THUN MONG BA'I LAM GYI RIM PAR BLO
SBYANG BA NI,

This brings us to our description of how actually to take the essence of this life. This part itself has three; the first is how to train one's mind in the Steps of the path which are shared with persons of lesser spiritual capacity, and is covered in the next two verses of the root text:

,LUS SROG G-YO BA CHU YIN CHU BUR BZHIN, ,MYUR DU 'JIG PA'I 'CHI
BA DRAN PA DANG , ,SHI BA'I RJES SU LUS DANG GRIB MA BZHIN, ,DKAR
NAG LAS 'BRAS PHYI BZHIN 'BRANG BA LA, ,NGES PA BRTAN PO RNYED
NAS NYES PA'I TSOGS, ,PHRA ZHING PHRA BA RNAMS KYANG SPONG
BA DANG , ,DGE TSOGS MTHA' DAG SGRUB PAR BYED PA LA, ,RTAG TU
BAG DANG LDAN PAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS, ,ZHES PA'I {SHI}OO KA GNYIS
KYIS BSTAN TE,

(3,4)

**My body and the life in it
Are fleeting as the bubbles
In the sea froth of a wave.
Bless me first thus to recall
The death that will destroy me soon;
And help me find sure knowledge**

**That after I have died
The things I've done, the white or black,
And what these deeds will bring to me,
Follow always close behind,
As certain as my shadow.**

**Grant me then
Ever to be careful,
To stop the slightest
Wrong of many wrongs we do,
And try to carry out instead
Each and every good
Of the many that we may.**

DE LTAR DAL 'BYOR GYIS RTEN BZANG KHYAD PAR CAN THOB KYANG
LUS SROG YUN RING DU MI GNAS PAR G-YO ZHING 'GYUR NAS SKAD
CIG MA RE RES KYANG 'CHI BA LA JE NYER 'GRO BAR MA ZAD,

And so we have attained this very special kind of life, with its spiritual leisure and fortune. But *my body and the life in it are fleeting*, forever changing, and every passing moment they move inexorably closer to my death.

'CHI RKYEN GLO BUR BA NAD GDON BGECS RIGS 'BYUNG BZHI'I GNOD
PA SOGS KYIS TSE SROG 'PHROG PA LA KHYIS GLUD LA BRNGAMS PA
LTAR BSKOR NAS BSDAD YOD CING ,

But that's not all--there are conditions all around me that can strike and kill me in an instant: things like illness and harmful spirits, sudden disasters, attacks upon me by the very four elements that make up my own body. They stand around me ready to snatch away my life, like a pack of dogs circling around a piece of fresh

meat, lusting after it.⁴⁷

RANG GI LUS 'DI CHU'I CHU BUR BZHIN DU RKYEN PHRA MO TZAM
YANG MI THEG PAR TSER MA ZUG PA TZAM GYIS KYANG 'CHI BA'I
RKYEN DU BYED NUS PA MTHONG CHOS SU 'ONG BA SOGS LTAR

Still more, my body is like a *bubble in the sea froth of a wave*; it has no power to resist even some very minor harm: we can see with our own two eyes that even the prick of a thorn can lead to a person's death.

SHIN TU NYAM CHUNG BAS NA, MYUR DU 'JIG PA'I 'CHI BA 'ONG TSUL
RJE'I LAM RIM CHE CHUNG SOGS LAS GSUNGS PA LTAR RTZA BA GSUM
DANG , RGYU MTSAN DGU, THAG BCAD PA RNAM PA GSUM GYI SGO
NAS 'CHI BAR NGES SHING , NAM 'CHI LA NGES PA MED LUGS, 'CHI BA'I
TSE GNYEN NOR LONGS SPYOD SOGS DANG , THA NA LUS KYIS KYANG
MI PHAN PA RNAMS

In sum, my body and life are fragile; so *death will destroy me soon*. Here you should use the instructions on your coming death that we find in works like the longer and briefer presentations of the Steps of the path by our Lord, Tsongkapa. These sections cover the three principles of death and the nine reasons for them, along with the three resolutions to be made.⁴⁸ They show how our death is certain, and how uncertain we are of when it will come. When it does, none of the people close to us, nor any of the things we own, nor anything else of the kind can help us. In the end, not even our body can be of any assistance.

YANG DANG YANG DU BSAMS SHING DRAN PA DANG , DE YANG
RANG DGAR 'CHI BA LA SKRAG STE BSDAD PAS MI 'ONG ZHING , BU
STON THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA'I ZHAL NAS,

Think on these points, *recall* them, again and again. The object here is not to reach a point where you sit in some confused terror over the death that's coming to you. Rather you must come to see that, at the moment of death and as you take your future life, only the Dharma can help you: everything else turns useless. Remember the words of the omniscient Buton, who has spoken:

,TSE 'DI LONG MED MYUR DU 'CHI 'GYUR ZHING , ,GSOD SAR KHRID PA'I
DUD 'GRO JI BZHIN DU, ,SKAD CIG RE RE BZHIN YANG 'CHI LA NYE,
,DENG BYA SANG BYA'I BSAM PA MA RDZOGS PAR,

,BSAM PA BRGYA PHRAG MA BSAMS GCIG 'OG TSUD, ,GSHIN RJE 'JIGS
RUNG NYAM PA'I MDUN BSUS NAS, ,MAL GYI THA MAR DBUGS SDUD
SROG CHAD TSE, ,CHOS LAS GZHAN GYIS MI PHAN RIN CHEN GRUB,

You are not long in this life
Death comes quick;
You step ever nearer to it
With every moment that passes,
Moving on like an animal
Dragged to the slaughterhouse.

Your plans for today
Your plans for tomorrow
Will never all be filled;
Let go all your thousand plans,
Devote yourself to one.

You will be summoned into
The awesome presence of Lord Death;
The end is lying on your bed,
The breathing stops, the life is gone.

And on this day,
My Rinchen Drup,
Nothing but the Dharma
Is any help to you.⁴⁹

,CES PA DANG , PHA DAM PA SANGS GYAS KYIS, ,LAS KYI RNAM SMIN
RGYU 'BRAS BDEN NGES PAS, ,MI DGE SDIG LA 'DZEMS SHIG DING RI BA,

Pa Dampa Sangye too has said:

The results of deeds you've done,
The cause and consequence,
Are finally true and fixed.

People of Dingri listen:
Avoid then any bad deed,
Any wrong at all.⁵⁰

,ZHES DANG , ,PHYI MA'I YUL NA GNYEN BSHES NYUNG BA YIN, ,BLO
GTAD CHOS LA GYIS SHIG DING RI BA,

And then he states:

In the land beyond us friends
And relatives are few;
People of Dingri listen:
Turn your thoughts to Dharma.⁵¹

,ZHES SOGS DANG , BO DONG PAⁿ CHEN 'JIGS BRAL PHYOGS LAS RNAM
RGYAL GIS KYANG , SKYE BA SNGA PHYI YOD PAR RIGS PAS KYANG
SHES TE, MI LUS RGYU MED LAS YONG NA SHES BYA THAMS CAD MI
LUS KYIS GANG BA'I TSOD YIN, MI LUS SEMS SNGA MA SNGON DU MA
SOGS BAR BEM PO TZAM LA 'ONG NA, SA RDO RI LUNG THAMS CAD MI
LUS KYIS GANG BA'I TSOD YIN GSUNG STE

The master teacher of Bodong, whose name was Jikdrel Chokle Namgyal, has also said:

The existence of past and future lives can be understood as well through logical reasoning. If the human body could occur without any proper cause, then every existing object might just as well be stuffed full of human bodies. If the human body could occur without any involvement of previous consciousness if it could come from physical matter alone then every bit of dirt, every rock, every mountain and stream might just as well be stuffed full of human bodies.

CHAD LTA BA RNAMS LA THOG BABS PA DANG 'DRA BA YIN, GZHAN
YANG MKHAS GRUB MNGON SHES CAN MANG POS GZIGS PAS KYANG
RANG GZHAN YI BAR DO DANG SKE BA SNGA PHYI DRAN PA'I RNAM
THAR SHIN TU MANG ZHING , PHYI ROL BA'I DRANG SRONG MNGON
SHES CAN RNAMS KYIS KYANG SKYE BA BRGYAD CU DRAN PA LA SOGS
PA BYUNG BA YIN,

For those who deny that life goes on, hearing these lines is like being struck by a bolt of lightning. There are moreover quite numerous accounts of many wise and accomplished practitioners who have used clairvoyance to perceive the past and future lives, as well as the state between death

and rebirth, which they and others have passed through. There are also cases like those of the non-Buddhist adepts who attain clairvoyance that allows them to recall eighty of their different lives.⁵²

,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR 'CHI BA'I SKABS DANG PHYI MA'I SKYE BA LEN PA'I TSE CHOS MA GTOGS GZHAN GANG GIS KYANG MI PHAN PAS NA, TSE BLOS BTANG GIS PHYI MAR PHAN THABS KYI 'CHI CHOS GSHA' MA ZHIG NGES PAR SGRUB PA GAL CHE STE, RANG RE RNAMS SHI BA'I RJES SU RIG PA RGYUN CHAD NAS MED DE MI 'GRO BAR SKYE BA RE MA BLANGS THABS MED LA, DE LEN SA BDE 'GRO NGAN 'GRO GNYIS LAS MA 'DAS,

Since nothing else can help then, it is essential that we give up on life and be sure to devote ourselves to death, by practicing some pure form of the Dharma, as a way to assist our future self. It's not as if, *after* you and *I have died*, the stream of our mind just stops and we turn into nothing. Rather we have no choice but to take another birth. And there are no more than two places where we can take that birth: in the higher realms of happiness, or the lower realms of misery.

DE GNYIS GANG DU SKYE RANG LA RANG DBANG MED PAR 'GRO BA GNYIS KYI RGYU'AM, LAS DKAR NAG GI RJES SU 'GRO DGOS SHING ,

We have absolutely no control over which of the two places we go; we must follow where we are sent by the separate causes for each place, and these causes are *the things we've done, the white and black*, respectively.

RANG RGYUD LA BDE 'GRO'I RGYU SHIN TU NYUNG LA, NGAN 'GRO'I RGYU NI HA CANG MANG BA YOD, DA LTAR DGE SDIG GI BYA BA DKAR NAG JI 'DRA ZHIG BYAS KYANG 'CHI KHAR DE DANG MTHUN PA'I LAS SHIG LA GSOS BTAB NAS NYING MTSAMS SBYOR DGOS LA,

Our mental streams contain very, very few of the causes that will take us to a higher birth; but we have a vast multitude of the causes that will lead us to one of the births of misery. Right now we are doing both white deeds, and black deeds: the good and the bad. At the moment of death, the power of one or the other will be activated, and force us over to our next birth. The seeds of the deeds which are more plentiful are the kind that are likely to be activated.

DE NAS KYANG PHYI MAR DGE MI DGE'I LAS KYI 'BRAS BU BZANG NGAN CUNG ZAD KYANG MI 'CHOL BAR RNAM SHES GANG DU 'GRO

BA'I PHYI RJES SU LUS DANG GRIB MA JI BZHIN 'BRANG STE

And after we cross over to our new birth, the fair or foul consequences of our virtue or our evil will *follow close behind*. These consequences can never go wrong; good must come from the good, and bad from the bad. They will attach themselves to my consciousness and pass on to wherever it goes, *as certain as my shadow*.

BDE SDUG SO SO NAS MYONG DGOS TSUL RGYAL BA'I BKA' DRI MA
MED PA MDO SDE DANG 'DUL BA SOGS NAS LAS NGES PA DANG , 'PHEL
CHE BA, LAS MA BYAS PA DANG MI 'PHRAD PA, LAS BYAS PA CHUD MI
ZA BA SOGS DANG ,

This fact, that pleasure and pain are the respective results of good and evil, is spoken in the various collections of the immaculate Word of the victorious Buddhas: in the sutras, in the books of discipline, and so on. They describe things like how karma is certain to produce similar results; how it multiplies; how consequences of a karma not committed can never be experienced; and how the consequences of a karma committed can never just fade away on their own. It is spoken as well that:

,LUS CAN DAG GI LAS RNAMS NI ,BSAL PA BRGYAR YANG CHUD MI ZA,
,TSOGS SHING DUS LA BAB PA NA, ,BRAS BU SMIN PA NYID DU 'GYUR,
,CES GSUNGS,

The karma of sentient kind
Never just fades away,
Even in hundreds
Of millions of years.

When the causes convene
And the time is come,
The consequences
Can do nothing but flower.⁵³

MKHAS PA BO DONG BAS KYANG MDO LUNG 'DI DRANGS NAS, KHO BO
NI CHU BUR GYI MIG PAS STON PA'I BKA' LA TSA DMAR BYED DE, SHI
SKYE BA CHAD, RGAS MA LE BOG KYANG STON PA KHO NA LA YID
CHES BYED PA YIN, , ZHES GSUNGS YOD,

Master Bodongwa quotes these same lines from sutra and says,

People like you and I may have blurry eyes but we must look on this Word of the Buddha as perfectly accurate. If you die, then die; if you drop from old age, then drop; but if nothing else keep your trust in the Teacher.⁵⁴

DE LTAR GSUNGS PA'I RGYU MTSAN YANG , ZHI BA LHAS, ,LAS TSUL BSAM GYIS MI KHYAB STE, ,THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA KHO NAS MKHYEN, ,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR YIN PAS,

The thinking behind these lines is expressed in a verse by the Master Shantideva:

The way karma works
Is beyond comprehension;
Only the All-Knowing Know it.⁵⁵

STON PAS LAS 'BRAS KYI RNAM GZHAG MTHA' YAS PAR GSUNG BA LA NGES PA BRTAN PO RNYED THABS BYED CING , DE RNYED NAS SNGON CHAD SDIG PA BSAGS PA'I 'BRAS BUR TSE RJES MAR NGAN 'GROR 'GRO BAR SHES TE

Because of these facts you and I must seek a way to *find sure knowledge*, where we recognize the truth of the simply limitless workings of karma and consequences described by the Teacher. Once we have found this knowledge, we then understand that the necessary consequence of all the harmful deeds we have amassed up to now will be for us to pass on to the births of misery in our next life.

NGAN SONG GSUM GYI GTZO SREG TSA GRANG , BKRES SKOM NGAL 'JIGS, GLEN ZHING GTI MUG PA DANG , GCIG LA GCIG ZA LA SOGS PA'I SDIG BSNAL SHUGS DRAG TU BSAMS PAS YID 'JIGS NAS DE LAS SKYOB PA'I SKYABS DKON MCHO GSUM LA SNYING THAG PA NAS SKYABS SU 'GRO SHING ,

And what of these three lower realms? Think fiercely on their sufferings: the heat of the molten steel, the cold; the hunger, the thirst, exhaustion and terror; being unable to talk, living in dark ignorance, eating each other to survive, and all the rest. It will bring you fear, and from the depths of your heart you will go for shelter to the ones who can protect you: to the three Jewels.⁵⁶

PHYIN CHAD NGAN SONG DU SKYE BA'I RGYU NYES PAR SPYAD PA
SDIG PA MI DGE BA'I TSOGS SHES SLA BA'I RAGS PA RNAMS MI BYED PA
SMOS CI, HA CANG RIG DKA' BA'I SDIG PA PHRA ZHING PHRA BA
RNAMS KYANG NGOS ZIN PAR BYAS NA SPANG BA DANG ,

If harmful actions provide the causes that push us to these lower realms, then
needless to say we must from this point on avoid doing any of the *many wrongs*
that we do: those obvious non-virtues that anyone can see are mistaken. We must
also though seek to recognize and abandon even *the very slightest* harms we
commit; the ones we barely realize that we do.

LHAG PAR DU 'BROM CHOS KYI RGYAL POS, ,TSE LA LONG MED YUN
RING MI SDOD NGES, ,JIG RTEN LTO RGYAB SPRANGS KYANG PHYID DE
MCHIS, ,CHOS DANG MTHUN NA LTOGS GRIR SHI DOGS MED, ,JIG RTEN
'DI YI BYA BA RGYAB TU BOR, ,DI DANG PHYI MA GNYIS KA MI 'GRUB
KYI, ,PHYI MA GAL CHE CHOS LA 'BAD PA THON,

The most important thing is for us to follow the words of that King of the
Dharma, Dromton Je:

We have little time to live,
It's sure we'll not long be here.
Let the world pass the time
Working to feed themselves;
Even the poorest know how.

Those who follow the rules of Dharma
Need not worry,
The knife of hunger
Can never touch and kill them.

Leave this life behind;
You can't work for the future life
And for this one as well.
The next is the more important one;
Make effort in the Dharma.⁵⁷

,ZHES DANG , ,TSE 'DII LTO RGYAB JI LTAR BYAS KYANG PHYID, ,TSE
RABS PHYI MA CHOS DANG 'PHRAD PAR DKA', ,DE BAS TSE 'DIR CHOS

LA 'BAD PAR GYIS, ,DA LTA DGE BA'I LAS LA MA 'BAD NA, ,PHYI MAR
SDUG BSNAL MYONG BAR 'GYUR TA RE,

He says as well,

Whether you fill your belly
In this life well or not,
Still you will live on.

What's difficult is
To meet the Dharma
In your future life;

For this life then
Put all your efforts
Only in the Dharma.

If now you cannot do your best
To do what's virtuous,

Be sure that in the life beyond
You will feel only pain.⁵⁸

,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR PHYI MAR BDE 'GROR 'GRO BA'I RGYUR DGE
SDIG GI BLANG DOR RNAM PAR DAG PA ZHIG MA BYAS THABS MED, DE
BYA TSUL LA SPYIR MTHA' YAS PA LTA BU YOD KYANG , STON PA
THUGS RJE CAN GYIS RANG CAG GI BLANG DOR BYA SA'I GNAS CHE
LONG TZAM DU BSDUS NAS DGE MI DGE'I LAS LAM BCUR GSUNGS,

And so we have no other choice, if we hope to pass on to one of the better births
in our next life, than to prepare the proper cause; that is, to do the things we
should, and not do what we shouldn't. There are quite nearly a limitless number
of instructions on how to carry this out--to make it easy for us, the compassionate
Teacher provided a guide of what to take up and what to give up: this then is the
list of ten good deeds and ten bad deeds, the broadest simplification.⁵⁹

DES NA, MI DGE BCU SPONG GI TSUL KHRIMS BSRUNG BSAM TSON TE
SKYABS 'GRO'I BSLAB BYA PHRA RAGS KYIS BSDUS PA'I DGE BA'I TSOGS
MTHA' DAG TSUL BZHIN DU SGRUB PAR BYED PA LA DUS RTAG TU
DRAN SHES BAG YOD DANG LAN PA'I SGO NAS 'JUG PA ZHIG DANG ,

Keeping this morality, of avoiding the ten bad deeds, is just one typical example of *the many* different kinds of *good* that are contained within the broader and the more subtle instructions on how to go for refuge. We must engage in each and every one of these virtues by *being ever careful*--by acting with proper recollection and watchfulness in every moment of the day.

DER MA ZAD, SKYES BU CHUNG 'BRING DANG THUN MONG GI BSAM PA
SBYANG BA GANG GI SKABS KYANG BLO PHUGS SU SKYES BU CHEN PO'I
LAM LA BLO SBYONG BA GZHIR BCAS BYAS TE BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS
SKYE BAI THABS SU 'KHYEN SHES PA DGOS PAS, DE LTAR NUS PAR
GSOL BA BTAB PA YIN GSUNGS,

And we must go further: on every occasion that we train ourselves in these thoughts, in the Steps which are shared with persons of lesser and medium capacity, we must do so with the ultimate intent of using them as a foundation for training ourselves in the path for those of great capacity.

In short, said our Lama, we must understand how to employ these Steps as a means for developing the Wish for enlightenment. And in these lines we are requesting our Lama to help us find the ability to do so.

Notes to Reading Nine

37 *Three lower realms*: According to Buddhism there are six different types of rebirth. These are birth as a hell-being, a craving spirit, an animal, a human, one who is nearly a full pleasure being, and a full pleasure being. The first three types of birth are known as the three lower realms. Pleasure beings enjoy extremely long lives in a temporary paradise, and then normally fall to hell after exhausting their good karma. The classic presentation of the six rebirths is found in the third chapter of the *Treasure House of Knowledge*, by the 4th-century Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu; a typical commentary would be that of the First Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Gendun Drup (1391-1474).

38 *Born as a human*: The classic source for the description of spiritual fortunes is the *Levels of Listeners*, one of the major divisions of the *Levels of Practitioners*, written by the Indian Buddhist sage Asanga in the fourth century.

39 *Immediate bad deeds*: Buddhism teaches that there are five misdeeds which are so evil that they are sure to lead one to a hellbirth in the very next life. The

deeds are, from most serious to least, the following: causing a schism in the community of monks; attempting to kill a Buddha; killing someone who has reached nirvana; killing one's mother, and killing one's father. A full discussion of the five is found in the fourth chapter of Master Vasubandhu's *Treasure House of Wisdom*, and in commentaries such as the one by Jampay Yang of Chim (c. 1280).

40 *Discipline one's mind*: The collection on discipline, or vowed morality, is actually only one of the three sections of the original Buddhist canon; the point is that all the scriptures though teach the absolute importance of moral behavior. For a description of the three collections see note 20.

41 *For the sake of others*: Again the original source in prose is Master Asanga's *Levels of Listeners*.

42 *The four results*: The four fruits of the "way of virtue," which in this case refers to the direct perception of selflessness. The four are to attain the state of a foe destroyer; of one who need never again take rebirth in this realm of desire; of one who must take one more rebirth in this realm; and of one who has "entered the stream"—one who, due to his realization of selflessness, is clearly headed for freedom. The four are presented for example in the second and sixth chapters of Master Vasubandhu's *Treasure House*, with its commentary by the First Dalai Lama.

43 *Even by the likes of the monk Udayi*: The monk was one of the members of the Buddha's inner circle, but committed a series of misdeeds which actually led to the creation of a number of the rules for monks. See Professor Edgerton's *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, as well as the First Dalai Lama and Jampay Yang of Chim. This same concept of Udayi possessing spiritual fortunes that we lack is found as well in Pabongka Rinpoche's *Gift*.

44 *Fewer still*: The *Foundation Word on Vowed Morality* is one of the four famed explanatory sutras on the subject of vowed morality. An exquisite passage found there begins as follows:

And then Lord Buddha touched the very tip of his precious fingernail to the ground, and raised it up, and showed it to the assembled monks. He said,

Monks! Which do you think are more: the atoms of

dust here on the tip of my fingernail, or the atoms of dust contained in the entire planet of earth?

And the monks replied,

Oh Reverend One, Oh Conqueror, the atoms of dust there on the tip of Your precious fingernail are less, they are certainly less, they are most certainly less, they are infinitely less. If one compared them to the number of atoms of dust in this great orb they would not amount to a hundredth, nor even a thousandth, nor a hundred thousandth, nor any fraction at all, nor any part—no countable part, no comparison, no basis for a comparison.

The Conqueror spoke again:

Monks! Think of the number of atoms of dust in the entire planet: this stands for the number of beings who are in hell now and who, after they die, will migrate back to hell. Now think of the number of atoms of dust on my fingernail: this stands for the number of beings who are in hell now and who, after they die, will migrate to the world of humans.

The Buddha continues his description in a similar vein for all the other types of rebirths—including humans who are reborn as hell beings (as many as atoms of dust in the planet), as opposed to humans who are reborn as humans (as many as the atoms of dust on his fingernail).

This presentation appears throughout the various books on the Steps to Buddhahood: see those of Je Tsongkapa, Pabongka Rinpoche, and the First Panchen Lama.

45 *A turtle in the sea*: These well known lines are found in a letter from the realized being Nagarjuna (c. 200 AD) to his friend, King Udayibhadra.

46 *Keeper of the Diamond himself*: That is, tantric Buddhahood: enlightenment in one lifetime.

47 *Like a pack of dogs circling*: The Tibetan original at this point actually refers to "dogs who circle the talisman." In certain cases of illness brought on by harmful spirits, a Lama will by tradition come to the house of the patient and prepare a small likeness or talisman representing the person. A ritual is held centered around the talisman to help remove the evil influence. The figurine is fashioned from a soft dough and, at the end of the ceremony, is carried outside and placed on the ground—where hungry Tibetan mastiffs are usually waiting to gulp it down. The image here then is of a pack of dogs crowded eagerly around the ritual attendant as he carries out the prize.

48 *The three principles of death*: This presentation of death appears in many of the texts on the Steps to Buddhahood, and is summarized as follows in a note from the English translation of Je Tsongkapa's *Principal Teachings of Buddhism* (the text of his *Three Principal Paths*).

In his masterwork *A Gift of Liberation*, Pabongka Rinpoche lists six benefits of keeping your mind on death: your practice becomes really pure; it gains power; the thoughts help you start practice; they help you strive hard during your practice; they help bring your practice to a successful conclusion; and in the hour of death you go with satisfaction, for you know you have spent your life meaningfully.

The Rinpoche also lists six problems that come from not keeping your mind on death: you neglect your religious life, and spend all your days in thoughts of what to eat or wear—this life's distractions; you consider death occasionally but always think it will come later, and delay your practice; or you do practice, but for the wrong reason—with hopes of reputation; you practice but with no enthusiasm, and drop it after a while; you get deeper into this life, your attitude gets worse, and life begins to hurt you; and at death you naturally feel intense regret, for you have wasted all your efforts on this present life.

The three principles, for how actually to keep your mind on death, have three reasons each, making a total of nine. First of all, death is certain: no power in the universe can stop death when it arrives; there is no way to add time to your life, you come closer to death every minute; and even while you are alive, the free time available for your practice is extremely limited before you have to die.

The second principle is that there is absolutely no certainty when you will die. We are in a time and realm where the length of life is uncertain; we can be sure we will never have enough time to defeat all our enemies, raise up all our

friends, and still complete our religious practice before we die. The things that can kill us are many; the things that keep us alive are few. And in general the body we have is fragile, weak: a small splinter in the hand can give us an infection that kills us—we are like bubbles, like candles in a windstorm.

The third principle is that, at the moment of death, nothing at all can help us but our spiritual practice. None of your money or things can help you. None of your friends or family can help you—they can be holding you tightly by the arms and legs, but still you will slip away alone. And not even your own body can help you—you have to give up your most cherished possession, your beloved body, along with everything else.

The three principles call for three resolves on our part. Knowing that we shall have to die, we must resolve to begin our practice. Knowing that we could die any time, we must quit our worldly work immediately and start our practice today. And finally, since nothing else can help us, we must devote ourselves to our practice only. A man who is hiking many miles doesn't fill up his pack with a lot of junk that he won't be needing.

The above points are paraphrased from the works on the Steps of the path by Lord Tsongkapa and Pabongka Rinpoche. For the last point mentioned in the text, the meditation on what it's like to die, we quote the Rinpoche directly:

They try all different kinds of treatments and holy rituals but your condition gets worse and worse. The doctors start lying to you. Your friends and relatives say all sorts of cheery things to your face, but behind your back they start wrapping up your affairs, because everyone can see you're going to die.

Your body starts to lose its familiar warmth. It's hard to breathe. The nostrils collapse. The lips curl back. The color starts to drain from your face. All sorts of repulsive signs begin to show, inside and outside of you.

You think of all the wrong things you did in your life, and wish so badly you had never done them. You can't quite be sure if you ever really got rid of them all when you confessed; or that you really did any true good deed. Then comes the final pain, the unspeakable searing pain that comes with death. The basic building blocks of your body begin their domino collapse, you are blinded by catastrophic images, hallucinations of pure terror crowd into your mind, and carry you away, and the whole world you have been living blinks out.

People take your corpse and wrap it up in a sheet and lay it in some corner. They hang up a curtain to hide it. Somebody lights up a smudgy little candle and leaves it there. If you're one of those reincarnated lamas, they dress you up in you fancy ritual robes and try to make you look good.

Right now we are all running around trying to arrange ourselves a nice house, soft clothes, cozy chairs. But you know the custom here in Tibet—when you die they'll tie your arms and legs up against your chest with a leather strap, carry the body far from town, and throw it naked out on the rocks.

Right now we all go home and try to cook ourselves up some delectable dish—but there will come a day when you stand there praying for a little taste of those cakes they offer the spirits of the dead. Right now we have the big name—they call us Doctor Professor, or Respected Sir, or Your Reverence. But there will come a day when they look at your body and call you nothing but "that stinking corpse." There will come a day when the title they put in front of your name is "the late," or "that guy they used to call..."

So now when you respected lamas out there in the audience look at your ritual robes, let it come into your thoughts that these are the robes they will dress your remains in after you have expired. And all the rest of us, when we look at our bedsheets before we go to sleep, should try to remember that these are what they will wrap our stinking corpse in when we die. As Milarepa said,

That frightful corpse they talk about
Is the very body you wear, meditator.

He means look at your own body now, and always see the future corpse.

49 *Nothing but the Dharma*: Original source of quotation not found. The advice is to himself, for Master Buton's full name was Rinchen Drup (1290-1364). He was a consummate scholar of both the secret and open teachings, and Je Tsongkapa was much influenced by his writings and by his direct disciples. Buton Rinpoche also played a major role in the organization of the Buddhist canon in its Tibetan translation.

50 *Avoid then any bad deed*: Pa Dampa Sangye (d. 1117?) was an Indian Buddhist master who helped bring the teachings to Tibet, and in particular began the lineage of a practice called the "Termination of Suffering." The lines here are found in a collection of advices to the Tibetans of an area called Dingri.

51 *Turn your thoughts to the Dharma*: This passage is from the same work as the preceding.

52 *Eighty of their different lives*: Original source of quotation not found. Bodong Rinpoche, full name Bodong Panchen Chokle Namgyal (1375-1450), was one of the most prolific writers in the history of Buddhism—his collected works subsume no less than 137 volumes.

53 *Never just fades away*: These lines are some of the most famous in all of Buddhist literature. They were spoken by Lord Buddha himself and occur throughout the sutras on vowed morality as a sort of refrain—for example in the *Divisions of Vowed Morality*, and the *Foundation Word*. Their contents are alluded to also in the famed *Sutra of Cosmic Play*.

The importance of the concept that the power of an act cannot just fade away after we commit it is indicated by the fact that many of the earlier Indian masters include the lines in their philosophical commentaries. Master Nagarjuna (200 AD), for example, alludes to them in his *Root Text on Wisdom*, and *Beyond All Fear*. Master Bhavya (490-570 AD) speaks of them in his famous *Blaze of Reasoning*, as does Master Avalokitavrata in his *Extensive Commentary to the Lamp of Wisdom*. The renowned Chandrakirti (650 AD) refers to the quotation in his *Clarification of the Words*, his *Commentary to the 400 Verses*, and his *Commentary to the Seventy Verses on Emptiness*. It appears as well in Master Parahita's explanation of the same work.

In Tibet as well the verse and the idea behind it have been considered indispensable, and it is referred to in a great number of works on the Steps of the Path. See for example the treatises of Geshe Drolungpa, Je Tsongkapa, the First Panchen Lama, and Pabongka Rinpoche himself.

54 *If nothing else keep your trust*: Original source of quotation not found; it is in a very old local dialect, but the meaning seems correct. For information about the author, see note 52.

55 *Only the All-Knowing know it*: The lines are found in the fourth chapter of *The Bodhisattva's Life*, a famed manual for aspiring saints dating from the 8th century.

56 *The ones who can protect you*: The three lower realms described here are—respectively—the worlds of hellbeings, craving spirits, and animals. The Three Jewels that can protect us from them are the Buddha, Dharma, and

Sangha. The Buddha Jewel is defined as "That ultimate source of protection: the One who has reached the final end of his own goals, and the ability to achieve others' as well." The Dharma Jewel is "The pure side of existence, either in the form of the end of all suffering, or the path to that end." The Sangha Jewel, finally, consists of "All those who are realized"—that is, the Community of all people who have realized emptiness directly. For these and an illuminating discussion on the act of taking refuge, see Kedrup Tenpa Dargye, *Analysis of the Perfection of Wisdom*.

57 *We have little time to live*: The lines by Lord Atisha's renowned disciple are found in a short exquisite work entitled *Second Epistle to Shangtrang Kaberchung*, itself a part of the famed *Collected Treasure of Beloved Jewels* from the teachings of the Kadampa Lamas. The quotation here appears to consist of two parts from different places in the text, but the intent is certainly the same.

58 *You will feel only pain*: Quotation from the same source as the last.

59 *The broadest simplification*: The list of ten bad deeds (their avoidance being the ten good deeds) are a very gross abbreviation of the multitude of harmful actions which we are capable of performing. They include three which we perform with our bodies: killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. The next four are verbal: lying, divisive talk, harsh words, and idle speech. The final three are mental: coveting, ill will towards others, and wrong views. The classic presentation of the ten is found in the "Chapter on Deeds" from the *Treasure House of Knowledge*, composed by the 4th-century Indian sage Vasubandhu.

GNYIS PA SKYES BU 'BRING DANG THUN MONG BA'I LAM GYI RIM PAR
BLO SBYANG BA LA GNYIS LA, DANG PO THAR PA DON DU GNYER BA'I
BLO BSKYED PA NI,

With this we have reached the second part in the advices on how to take the essence of this life; that is, how to train one's mind in the Steps of the path which are shared with persons of medium spiritual capacity. Here there are two divisions. The first is learning how to want freedom, and is presented in the single verse of the root text which follows:

,SPYAD PAS MI NGOMS SDUG BSNAL KUN GYI SGO, ,YID BRTAN MI
RUNG SRID PA'I PHUN TSOGS KYI, ,NYES DMIGS RI GNAS THAR PA'I BDE

BA LA, ,DON GNYER CHEN PO SKYE BAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS, ,ZHES PA'I
{SHI}OO KA GCIG GSUNGS,

(5)

**Bless me to perceive
All that's wrong
With the seemingly good things
Of this life.**

**I can never get enough of them.
They cannot be trusted.
They are the door
To every pain I have.
Grant me then
To strive instead
For the happiness of freedom.**

DE LTAR 'CHI BA'I NGANG TSUL DANG , NGAN SONG GI SDUG BSNGAL
BSAM ZHING , SKYABS 'GRO DANG LAS 'BRAS KYI BLANG DOR LA TSUL
BZHIN 'BAD PAS, GNAS SKABS MNGON MTHO LHA MI'I RTEN BZANG
DANG DPAL 'BYOR PHUN SUM TSOGS PA LAN RE LAN GNYIS TZAM
'THOB PA SRID MOD,

Suppose we are able to follow all the instructions above: we contemplate how death works, and think on the sufferings of the lower realms. Then we make all the effort we are supposed to in going for refuge, and in observing the laws of deeds and their consequences. Admittedly then we could manage, once or twice, to reach one of the better forms of life--as a pleasure being or human--and also acquire some incredible amount of wealth; at least for the time being.

'KHOR BA'I BDE BA NI JI TZAM BYUNG YANG LONGS SPYAD PAS MI
NGOMS PAR DA DUNG CHAGS PA LHAG PAR 'PHEL TE SDUG BSNGAL MI
BZAD PA DU MA 'DREN PAR BYED PAS SDUG BSNGAL KUN GYI SGOR
GYUR PA YIN CING ,

But the nature of all pleasant things in the circle of life is that, no matter how much we get, and no matter how much we enjoy what we get, we never feel as though we've had enough. It only makes us want more, it only increases our desire. And this then delivers to us a whole variety of unbearable pain. The

pleasant things turn around, and become the door to every pain I have.

DE YANG RGYAL MCHOG LNGA PA CHEN POS, ,SNGON THOG MED DUS
NAS RANG SEMS DANG , ,DUS SKAD CIG 'BRAL BA MED PA YI, ,GROGS
NYON MONGS 'DI KO BSTEN BSTEN PAS, ,MTHA' MI MNGON 'KHOR BA'I
RGYA MTSOR BSKYUR, ,LAS MI 'DOD RLUNG GIS RAB BSKYED NAS,
,YONGS SDUG BSNGAL GSUM GYI RBA KLONG DU, ,DUS GTAN DU MGAL
MI LTAR 'KHOR BA, , 'DI BSAMS KYIN NYON MONGS DVANGS MA'I DGRA,
,TSE 'DI SNANG DGRA ZHIG BSAD PA LA, ,RANG GO CHOD DPAG BOR
RLOM BYED NA, ,DUS GTAN GYI DGRA PO NYON MONGS 'DI, ,DA GDUL
PA'I DUS LA NGES PAR BAB,

That highest of Victors, the Great Fifth of the Dalai Lamas, has said as well,

What happened before?

Someone has been in my mind for time with no beginning.

When was that?

There's never been a moment when they were gone.

Who are they?

I live, and live again, the mental afflictions.

And in the end?

They will leave me to rot in the ocean of suffering
life, without an end in sight.

And the karma?

It comes like the wind, with all the things I never
wanted.

How far?

It whips around me everywhere, and stirs great waves,
the three forms of suffering.

How long?

I could wander around this sea forever; the torch would
spin, and the circle of light would blaze.

What should I see?

Think on this, and see that the afflictions of the mind
are the one true enemy.

What must be done?

The enemy of living for this life must die.

Who shall do it?

You will have to pretend that you are warrior enough to
be the one.

When will it come?

Your foes, the afflictions in your mind, have always
been there waiting, ready for the battle.

Now then?

The time has surely come: go forth now and defeat them.⁶⁰

,CES GSUNGS PA LTAR 'KHOR BA 'DIR SDUG BSN GAL THAMS CAD
'BYUNG BA'I RTZA BA NI, RANG GIS GCES PAR BYAS TE SNYING DBUS SU
BCUG PA'I NYON MONGS PA'I DGRA PO 'DI NYID YIN LA,

As the lines point out, there is one thing which acts as the very root of all our sufferings here in the circle of life. This is none other than the enemy of the mental afflictions, so dearly cherished by us, so close to our hearts.

'DIS RANG CAG RNAMS SNGON CHAD THOB MED NAS DA BAR SDUG
BSN GAL MI BZAD PA LA SBYAR ZHING , DA DUNG NYON MONGS 'DI
GTAN BRLAG TU GTONG THUB PA ZHIG MA BYUNG NA, DE'I DBANG GIS
LAS BSAGS, LAS KYI DBANG GIS 'KHOR BA'I GNAS SU NYING MA TSAMS
SBYAR, DER SLAR YANG NYON MONGS PAS LAS BSAGS TE DE'I DBANG
GIS NYER LEN GYI PHUNG POR NYING MTSAMS SBYAR NAS 'GRO BA
RIGS DRUG TU YANG DANG YANG DU SKYE BA LEN PA THAG CHOD,

From time with no beginning up to the present moment, this enemy has led us by the hand to all kinds of unbearable pain. And if still we find ourselves unable to discard these bad thoughts once and for all, they will force us to collect karma. Then the karma will force us to take yet another birth in this house, in the circle of suffering life. And there once again the afflictions will start, and then we'll collect the karma anew. And so it is decided: this karma again will force us into the impure parts of a suffering being, in one of the six forms of life. We'll be born,

and then again, and over again and again, wandering through these six.⁶¹

DE BLANGS NA 'KHOR BA 'DIR MTHO DMA' GANG 'DRA ZHIG TU SKYE
BA BLANGS KYANG SDUG BSNAL GSUM GYIS GO MTSAMS MED PAR
MNGAR BA LAS, BDE BA'I SKABS CUNG ZAD KYANG MI 'BYUNG BAS
GNAS GANG DU PHYIN KYANG SDUG BSNAL GYI GNAS, GROGS SU
DANG 'GROGS KYANG SDUG BSNAL GYI GROGS, LONGS SPYOD GANG
LA LONGS SPYAD KYANG SDUG BSNAL GYI LONGS SPYOD KHO NA
LAS MA 'DAS,

Once we have taken a birth in the cycle, we'll find ourselves tormented by the three different kinds of suffering, without the slightest break.⁶² It doesn't matter at all whether we take a higher birth or a lower one; there exists no such thing as a pleasant moment here. Whatever place we go is a place that brings us pain. Whatever friend we go with is a friend who brings us pain. Whatever possession we have is a possession which brings us pain. They cannot and will not ever be anything else.

'O NA DE LTA'I SDUG BSNAL DANG 'BRAL BA'I THABS JI LTAR BYA
DGOS SNYAM NA, LAS DANG NYON MONGS PA'I RANG BZHIN CAN GYI
'KHOR BA'I SKYE RGYUN GCOD THUB PA ZHIG MA BYUNG BAR DU
SDUG BSNAL DANG BRAL BA'I GNAS MED LA,

"What way then," you may ask, "must I follow to escape this pain?" You must find a way to stop the stream of births, the circle of life that has karma and the mental afflictions as its very nature. Until you manage to do so, you will never find a place that is free of this suffering.

'KHOR BA'I SKYE RGYUN GCOD PA LA RJE BLA MA'I LAM GTZO'I RTZA
TSIG LAS, ,LAS 'BRAS MI SLU 'KHOR BA'I SDUG BSNAL RNAMS, ,YANG
YANG BSAMS PAS PHYI MA'I SNANG SHAS

The key to stopping the stream of suffering births is found in the root text of the *Three Principal Paths*, where the Lord of Lamas says,

Think over and over how deeds and their fruits
never fail,
And the cycle's suffering: stop desire
for the future.

LDOG,CES PA LTAR THOG MAR 'KHOR BA'I PHUN TSOGS KYI MTHAR THUG TSANGS PA BRGYA BYIN 'KHOR BSGYUR SOGS KYI LUS RTEN DANG DPAL 'BYOR LTA BU RNYED KYANG YIN BRTAN MED PAR SNGAR MI DGE BA BSAGS PA'I LAS KYI 'BRAS BUR MTHAR NGAN SONG GSUM LA SOGS PAR SKYES TE 'KHOR BA'I SDUG BSNGAL MTHA' MED DU MYONG DGOS TSUL DANG ,

Suppose at first we are able to find the very highest of the supposed good things of this life: we attain the celestial form or fantastic wealth of a god-like being such as Pure One, or Hundred Gift, or one of those emperors who rules the world with a disk of power. None of these forms can be trusted though, for the inevitable end of each is that we meet the karmic *fruits of bad deeds* we collected before. These deeds throw us into births like those of the lower realms, where we are forced to go through the unlimited variety of pain here in the *cycle of suffering life*.

KUN 'BYUNG LAS DANG NYON MONGS PA'I NYES DMIGS YANG YANG BSAMS NAS PHYI MA'I SNANG SHAS LDOG PA DGOS SHING ,

We must understand this process, and think over and over about all the problems brought to us by the great source of all pain: ignorant deeds and the mental afflictions. We must *stop desire for any future lives*.

DE LA DANG POR, SNGAR SKYES BU CHUNG NGU'I SKABS BSHAD PA BZHIN DU, ,DAL 'BYOR RNYED DKA' TSE LA LONG MED PA, ,YID LA GOMS PAS TSE 'DI'I SNANG SHAS

Before we can do this we need something else:

Leisure and fortune are hard to find, life's not long;
Think it constantly, stop desire for this life.⁶³

LDOGS PA LTAR RNYED PAR DKA' BA'I DAL 'BYOR RTEN BZANG PO DA RES LAN CIG TZAM RNYED KYANG TSE LA SNON PA BRGYAG TU MED CING 'BRID BYED PAR MA CHAD PA YOD PAS DUS YUN RING POR MI GNAS PAR 'CHI DGOS PA'I TSUL BSAMS NAS TSE 'DI'I SNAG SHAS LDOG PA DGOS TE,

As the verse says, we must *stop desire for this life first*. To do so, think how *hard it is to find this leisure and fortune*. And think too on the following: while you may

have managed just this once to find a perfect body and life, still you must die. You cannot stay here long--there is no way to tack on any extra years to your life, and the years you do have leak away constantly, never pausing.

RANG RES NGAN 'GRO'I SKYE BA ZLOG PA DANG , THAR PA DANG
THAMS CAD MKHYEN PA'I GO 'PANG BSGRUB PA GANG LA'ANG TSE 'DI
SNANG GI ZHEN PA ZLOG PA 'DI THOG MTHA' BAR GSUM DU GAL CHE
ZHING ,

Whatever you and I hope to accomplish--whether it be keeping ourselves out of the three lower realms, or attaining freedom and the state of All-Knowing--we must learn to stop this habit of hoping for the "good" things of this life. This is absolutely essential all through our Dharma career: from the very beginning, on through the middle, and up to the final end.

'DI'I SKOR RNAMS BKA' GDAMS GSAR RNYING DANG BKA' BRGYUD
GONG MA TSO'I GSUNG LA BR TEN NAS BLO SBYANGS NA NUS PA CHE
BA YOD,

These last few points are covered especially well in the works of the new and older schools of the Keepers of the Word, as well as in the texts of the original masters in the Lineage of the Word.⁶⁴ If you use these books for training your mind in these Steps, you will have powerful results.

DE YANG RGYAL BA YANG DGON PAS, ,TSE NGES MED LA NAM 'CHI'I
DUS BTAB MED, ,BDUD 'CHI BDAG KHO BREL KHOM GYI BYUS MI RTZI,
,DUS DE RING 'BYUNG BZHI DANG RNAM SHES 'GYES GYUR NA, ,GDENG
DANG BLO BDE TSAGS SU TSUD DAM SOMS,

Listen to these descriptions of suffering life, first from the lips of the Victor, Yang Gonpa:

You can't be sure you will live,
Nor fix the time you die;

This monster, the Lord of Death,
Has no interest
To come at your convenience.

The four elements of your physical body

And your mind
Could go today their separate ways;

Think about it:
Can you ever feel secure,
Can you ever feel at peace?⁶⁵

,ZHES DANG , GZHAN YANG , ,BDE SDUG GTAM NGAN KHYAD BSAD
NAS, ,PHANGS SRIS BYAS PA'I NOR GYIS KYANG , ,KHAM CIG 'KHYER
DBANG MED PAS NA, ,DGOS DUS MED PA'I NOR GYIS CI, ,MTHUN 'JUG
NGO SRUNG BYED BYED NAS, ,SDUG ROGS BYAS PA'I GNYEN GYIS
KYANG , ,GOM GANG SKYEL MKHAN MED PAS NA, ,DGOS DUS MED PA'I
GNYEN GYIS CI, ,SGO GSUM RDUL DU RAB BRLAGS TE, ,BAD PAS
BRTZIGS PA'I MKHAR GYIS KYANG , ,'CHI BDAG NANGS GCIG MI THUN
NA, ,DGOS DUS MED PA'I KHANG PAS CI, ,ZHES BYA BA LA SOGS PA
DANG ,

He adds other lines including:

This devil, greed,
Collected money

Ignoring all comfort
And hardship to do so;

But we have no power
To carry even
A bit with us that day.

What's the use of money,
That's never there
When you need it?

Our friends and family
Stayed with us
Through thick and thin;

We won and kept them
By fitting in,
And maintaining our reputation.

But there's not one
Who can take one step
Along with us that day.

What's the use of family, friends,
Who are never there
When you need them?

With toil and sweat
We built a great
And wonderful house for ourselves;

To do it we obliterated
Every rule
Of what to do, or say, or think.

But what happens when
Lord Death decides
He'll not sleep in one morning?

What's the use of a house
That's never there
When you need it?

,DBYAR SPRIN CHEN 'KHRIGS PA'I NAM MKHA' LA, ,GLOG DA LTA
BYUNG BA DA LTA YAL, ,TSE MI RTAG PA'I SDUG BSNGAL THUR GYIS
DRAN, ,RTAG 'DZIN GRABS SHOMS KYI KHO THAG DE NAS CHOD,

And then he says,

In the summer
Great clouds crowd the sky,

And lightning comes,
And lightning goes

The suffering called impermanence
Drags our life
Downhill;

Dispense with the sense
Of permanence,
Of feeling prepared.

,RGYU NYI CHAR GYI RTEN 'BREL TSOGS PA LAS, 'JA' DA LTA BYUNG BA
DA LTA YAL, ,BDE SKYID MI RTAG PA'I SDUG BSNGAL THUR GYIS DRAN,
,MDZES CHOS MCHOR SGE G GI KHO THAG DE NAS CHOD,

The rain brings it on,
The fortuitous moment,
When everything is just right,

And a rainbow comes,
And a rainbow goes

The suffering called impermanence
Drags our happiness
Downhill;

Dispense with
Looking your best,
And strutting around.

,RGYU LHANDS KYIS KU CO BTAB PA NA, ,BRAG CA DA LTA BYUNG BA
DA LTA YAL, ,SNYAN GRAGS MI RTAG PA'I SDUG BSNGAL THUR GYIS
DRAN, ,CHE 'DOD GRAGS 'DOD KYI KHO THAG DE NAS CHOD,

A sudden sound
Brings it on,
And an echo comes,
And an echo goes
The suffering called impermanence
Drags our fame Downhill;

Dispense with
The hope for greatness,
The hope for a name.

,YUL DBUS KYI TSONG DUS MGRON KHANG DU, ,MGRON PO SNGA DRO

SLEB PA PHYI DRO THEGS, ,GROGS MI RTAG PA'I SDUG BSNGAL THUR
GYIS DRAN, ,GNYEN MTHUN 'JUG GI KHO THAG DE NAS CHOD,

They travel to the big city
To sell their wares,
And stop in some hotel,

The guest comes in the morning,
The guest leaves in the eve

The suffering called impermanence
Drags our friends Downhill;

Dispense with hoping
To fit in with your friends
And family.

,DBYAR DUS SBRANG MAS YANG YANG BSAGS PA YI, ,SBRANG TSANG
GLO BUR ZHIG PA MTHONG TZA NA, ,ZAS NOR MI RTAG PA'I SDUG
BSNGAL THUR GYIS DRAN, ,ZAS NOR GSOG 'JOG GI KHO THAG DE NAS
CHOD, ,CES DANG ,

In the summertime the bees
Labor and build up
Their hives,

But anyone can see
How they are wiped out
In an instant

The suffering called impermanence
Drags our food and money
Down the hill.

Dispense with trying
To gather together
All this money and food.

'BROM RGYAL BA'I 'BYUNG GNAS KYI RANG RGYUD BSKUL 'DEBS LAS
GSUNGS PA SOGS LTAR YANG NAS YANG DU BSAMS TE TSE 'DI'I SNANG

SHAS LDOG THABS LA 'BAD CING ,

Contemplate on these quotations, and on works like the verses by Drom Gyalway Jungne, where he urges himself to perfect his practice.⁶⁶ Think them over constantly, and try your hardest to follow the instructions on how to give up living for this life.

DES KYANG MI CHOG PA RGYAL MCHOG BSKAL BZANG RGYA MTSOS,
,KHAMGS GSUM 'KHOR BA ZHES GRAGS LCAGS SREG GI KHANG PA,
,PHYOGS BCU GANG DU PHYIN KYANG SDUG BSNAL GYIS BSREG PA'I,
,SNYING LA GZAN KYANG RANG GI SNANG TSUL DU 'DUG PA, ,GNAS
NGAN 'DI 'DRAR 'KHYAMS PA'I SNANG TSUL 'DI SKYO BA,

This in itself though is not enough, as expressed in the following words of Kelsang Gyatso, the highest of all the Victors:

This thing they call
The three realms of cyclic life
Is a house of red-hot steel;

Wherever you go
In any of the ten directions,
The suffering will burn you.

You wish so badly
That it weren't happening,
But this is its very nature.

How pitiful our life,
To wander aimlessly
In such a house of horrors.⁶⁷

,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR KHAMGS GSUM GYI 'KHOR BA 'DIR MTHO DMAN
GANG 'DRA ZHIG TU SKYES KYANG SDUG BSNAL GYI RANG BZHIN
KHO NA LAS MED TSUL BSAMS NAS 'KHOR BA LAS THAR THABS DANG ,
DGRA NYON MONGS PA 'JOMS THABS LA 'BAD DGOS,

This cycle of life, with its three different realms, is absolutely nothing but suffering, by its very nature. It doesn't matter at all whether you take a higher birth within it, or a lower--it's all the same. Consider carefully the truth of these

words, then go and seek some way of finding freedom from the cycle, and a way to smash your enemy: the afflictions of the mind.

DES NA RANG RES 'DZAM GLING 'DIR LUS LONGS SPYOD STOBS 'BYOR
SNYAN GRAGS JI TZAM 'DZOMS PAR BRLOMS KYANG , SO SO'I 'KHOS KA
LA DPAGS NA, DUD 'GRO 'BU SRIN DANG BYA BYE'U SOGS LAS KHYAD
PAR MA THON PA'I RIG RTZAL STOBS 'BYOR RGYA CHUNG CHUNG ZHIG
LAS MED PA

You and I might have some delusions about getting it all together in this world; a good body, lots of things, power, fame. Regardless of how far we progress in these things though, let's be honest. If we judge ourselves properly, we can see that we aren't really much more advanced in our intellect or strength than common animals, than bugs or birds or whatever.

'DI LA SHI SBAR 'THAM STE CHAGS SEMS DANG YID BRTAN BYAR MI
RUNG BA LTA CI, 'KHOR BA'I BDE 'BYOR GYI MTHAR THUG TSANGS PA
BRGYA BYIN DANG 'KHOR SGYUR GYI RGYAL SRID LA LONGS SPYOD PA
MANG PO YANG MTHAR NGAN 'GRO'I GNAS NGAN MI BZAD PAR
'KHYAM DGOS PAR BSHES SPRING SOGS NAS GSUNGS PA LTAR

These things are hardly something worth getting attached to, nothing you would want to hang on to until your dying breath, nothing you could trust at all. Much less; for you can even attain the ultimate pleasures and possessions of all cyclic life--you could become the mighty being called Pure One, or Hundred Gifts, or else enjoy all the many riches in the kingdom of a world emperor. In the end though it always turns out the way that the *Letter to a Friend* and other such works describe it: wandering aimlessly around in a house of horrors, the three lower realms of life.

SRID PA'I PHUN TSOGS JI 'DRA ZHIG THOB KYANG MTHAR BSLU BA'I
CHOS CAN LAS MA 'DAS PA'I RANG MTSANGS SAM NYES DMIGS LEGS
PAR BSAMS PAS, 'KHOR BA MTHA' DAG SDUG BSNAL GYI RANG BZHIN
CAN DU MTHONG ZHING RIG NAS,

It really doesn't matter what kind of so-called "good" thing you can get here in the world of suffering, eventually all it can do is deceive you. You must by yourself expose the lie; you must learn to think clearly about all the problems these things always bring to you. In time you will see, you will know, that every inch of this suffering cycle is in its essence pain.

GNAS SKABS NGAN SONG DANG , MTHAR THUG 'KHOR BA'I SDUG
BSNGAL MTHA' DAG LAS GROL BA'I THAR PA MI GNAS PA'I MYANG
'DAS KYI BDE BA THOB PAR 'DOD PA'I NGES 'BYUNG GI BSAM PA KHYAD
PAR CAN GZHAN GYI ZER RJES 'BRANG BA DANG KHA TZAM TSIG
TZAM GYI YAM ME BA LTA BU MA YIN PAR,

By then you will have renunciation, the kind that wants to reach the joy of the nirvana beyond both extremes,⁶⁸ freedom in the short run from the sufferings of the three lower births, and ultimately from each and every pain in the cycle of life. And it will be the extraordinary form of renunciation, not the rough kind that you get just from following whatever someone else tells you, not the one that stays in the mouth and not the heart, in words and not in truth.

THAR PA'I BDE BA LA DON GNYER CHEN PO BCOS MA MA YIN PA'I BLO
SHUGS DRAG TU SKYE BAR GSOL 'DEBS BYED PA YIN GSUNGS,

What we are requesting then here, said our Lama, is that our Lama grant us the strength to develop a very fierce desire, a strong and genuine wish to reach the happiness of freedom.

VI. Finding the Right Path to Freedom

GNYIS PA THAR PAR BGROD PA'I LAM GYI RANG BZHIN GTAN LA DBAB
PA NI,

This brings us to the second division of how to train one's mind in the Steps of the path which are shared with persons of medium spiritual capacity; that is, defining just what kind of path can take us to this freedom. This point is covered in a single verse from the root text:

,RNAM DAG BSAM PA DE YIS DRANGS PA YI, ,DRAN DANG SHES BZHIN
BAG YOD CHEN PO YIS, ,BSTAN PA'I RTZA BA SO SO THAR PA LA, ,SGRUB
PA SNYING POR BYED PAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS, ,ZHES PA'I {SHI}OO KA
GCIG STE,

(6)

**Grant that these pure thoughts
May lead me to be watchful**

**And to recall
What I should be doing,
Grant me to give
The greatest care
To make the vows of morality
The essence of my practice;
They are
The root of the Buddha's teaching.**

SNGAR BSHAD PA LTAR 'KHOR BA'I PHUN TSOGS LA'ANG SNYING PO
MED PAR MTHONG NAS 'KHOR BA MTHA' DAG LA YID GTING NAS LOG
STE, THAR PA DON GNYER GYI BLO RNAM PAR DAG BA NGES 'BYUNG GI
BSAM PA SHUGS DRAG PO DES DRANGS NAS, RJE THAMS CAD MKHYEN
PA NYID KYIS,

Up to now we have explained how to truly see that even the supposed good things of the circle of life have no essence at all. When that happens, we begin to feel a total disgust for every corner of the cycle of life. These fierce feelings of renunciation, *these pure thoughts* where we wish to reach the happiness of freedom, will *lead us* on to something else, as described by the Omniscient One himself:

,RGYAL BA'I GSUNG RAB MA LUS SDE SNOD GSUM, ,DE PHYIR BSTAN
PA'I SNYING PO BSLAB PA GSUM, ,DE DAG THOG MA TSUL KHRIMS
BSLAB PA STE, ,DE YI GNAS NI 'DUL BA YIN PAR GSUNGS,

The entire extent
Of the highest of spoken words,
The teaching of the Buddhas,
Is contained in the three collections.

This then is why
The three different trainings
Are the essence of the teachings.

These three start
With the training
Of morality,

And it's spoken that

It resides
In the collection on discipline.

,DE PHYIR LEGS PAR GSUNGS PA'I DAM PA'I CHOS, ,DUL BA'I TSUL LA
MANG PO BKOD PA LA, ,BSTAN PA'I GO RIM SHES PA'I MKHAS PA
RNAMS, ,CI YI PHYIR NA DGA' BA SKYE MI 'GYUR,

This explains why
So much of the holy Dharma,
Spoken so very well,

Was set down in the form
Of the works
On discipline.

Could it ever happen then
That those wise men
Who understand

The proper order
Of the teachings
Would not take joy in these?

,LHAG MTHONG SHES RAB BSLAB PA SKYE BA LA, ,ZHI GNAS TING 'DZIN
DGOS PA'I MING TZAM SNANG , ,DI NA RNAM DAG GTING 'DZIN SKYE
BA LA, ,TSUL KHRIMS BSLAB PA DGOS PA'I GTAM YAG NUB,

Nowhere does it say
Anything else but this:
If you hope to develop

Insight, the training
Of wisdom well,
You must find quietude,
That of concentration.

It says as well
That if you wish to develop
Pure single-pointed mind,

You must have the training
Of morality;
And this is fine advice.

,KHAS LEN TAM LA RAB TU DPA' BA YIS, ,DAM BCAS RAB TU 'DOR BA
PHAL BA'I PHAL, ,RANG GIS CI TZAM KHAS LEN BYAS PA YI, ,TSUL
KHRIMS BSRUNG LA BRTZON PA DAM PA'I TSUL,

Some brave souls
Claim they'll keep
A lot of different vows,

But it's oh so common
To see them smash
Whatever pledges they've made.

The way of the holy
Is to strive
To maintain their morality pure,

Exactly as
They have agreed
To do so.

,DE LTAR MTHONG NAS NYES PA'I SGO GSUM LA, ,YANG DANG YANG
DU RTOG PA'I SHES BZHIN DANG , ,DRAN DANG BAG YOD NGO TSA
KHREL YOD KYIS, ,LOG PA'I LAM DU ZHUGS PA'I DBANG PO'I RTA, ,BAD
PAS 'DU BAR BYED PA DE YI YID, ,DGE BA'I DMIGS PA GANG GANG 'DOD
DE LA, ,DE LTA DE LTAR RAB TU GNAS PAR 'GYUR, ,DE PHYIR TSUL
KHRIMS TING 'DZIN RGYU RU BSNGAGS,

Once you see
The truth in this,
Then use your watchfulness,

Constantly check
Your thoughts, words and deeds
To stop any wrong to come.

Recollect yourself,

Take the greatest care,
Have a sense of shame,
And consideration;

Use them on
the horse of the senses
When he mistakes the way.
Use your strength
To rein him in,
For this is the state of mind

That you can bring
To focus and stay
On any virtuous object

Solidly,
Whatever you want,
However you wish it to be;

And this is why
They sing the praises
Of morality as the way
To reach one-pointedness of mind.⁶⁹

,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR DRAN PAS DANG POR BLANG DOR GYI GNAS
MA BRJED PAR 'DZIN, SHES BZHIN GYIS BAR BAR DU SGO GSUM GYI
SPYOD PA LEGS NYES GANG DANG GANG DU 'GRO MI 'GRO LTA RTOG
BYED, BAG YOD KYIS SKABS THAMS CAD DU MI RUNG BA'I BSAM SBYOR
MTHA' DAG 'GOG CING , RUNG B'AI KUN SPYOD RNAMS BSTEN PA LAS
MI 'DA' BAR BYAS TE,

The process that Je Tsongkapa is describing goes like this. *Recollection* comes at the beginning, and keeps you from forgetting *what you should be doing*, and what you shouldn't be doing. *Watchfulness* then stops by from time to time to check whether or not the activities of your body, speech, and mind are tending towards right or wrong. One's ability to take *great care* in his life functions throughout; it prevents every sort of improper thought or action, and keeps one within the bounds of what is appropriate to undertake.

RGYAL BA'I BSTAN PA'I GNAD LUNG SDE SNOD GSUM GYI BRJOD BYA'I

DON RNAMS TSUL KHRIMS DANG , TING NGE 'DZIN DANG , SHES RAB
KYI BSLAB PA STE LHAG PA'I SLAB PA RIN PO CHE RNAM PA GSUM DU
'DU ZHING , PHYI MA 'DI GNYIS 'BYUNG MI 'BYUNG GI GNAS DANG ,
RTEN DANG , RTZA BA'AM SA GZHI LTA BU NI, GTZO BOR SO SOR THAR
PA'I TSUL KHRIMS NYID YIN LA,

The essential points of the entire *teaching of the victorious Buddha*, the meaning of the contents of the three collections of the Word, all this is included within three precious, extraordinary forms of training: the trainings of morality, of meditative concentration, and wisdom. The crux on which the latter two trainings turn, their basis, *their root* and the ground they stand upon, is in the main a single item: morality, in the form of the various vows of freedom.⁷⁰ As the great Panchen Lama, Lobsang Chukyi Gyaltsen has said,

,SNGON CHAD BCAS RKYANG PHRO MO DU MA LA, ,DI TZAM 'DAS
KYANG NYES PA CHUNG SNYAM DU, ,BSAM ZHING DE DANG 'GAL BA
DU MA BYAS, ,LEGS PAR BRTAGS NA DE LTAR SEMS PA DE, ,BDE 'GRO'I
SROG RTZA GCOD PA'I GSHED MAR

It all begins
When you think to yourself
"It won't hurt much

If I break a few
Of these minor vows
In a minor way";

Before too long
You have gone against
A great many of your vows.

If you really think about it,
This kind of attitude
Is like a butcher

Who comes to
Rip out the life
Of your future higher birth.⁷¹

'DUG,CES GSUNGS PA LTAR BCAS RGYANG PHRA MO ZHIG GIS KYANG

DE LTAR 'GYUR NA, DE LAS CHE BA'I NYES PA BSAGS PAS NI SDUG
BSNGAL BZOD GLAGS MED PA'I NGAN 'GRO KHO NAR BRGYUD DE 'GRO
BA LAS 'OS MED PHYIR

The point here is that, if something so small as breaking a single minor vow can escalate so far, then needless to say when we amass a collection of even greater transgressions it's only proper that it would eventually lead us precisely to one of the three lower realms--to a kind of pain which is totally beyond our ability to withstand it.

BCAS RKYANG TSUN CHOD LA MNANGS CHUNG MI BYED PAR TSUL
BZHIN DU SRUNG DGOS PAS NA, DGE BSNYEN NAS DGE SLONG GI BAR
GYI SO THAR RIS BRGYAD PO'I BSLAB SDOM GANG KHAS BLANGS PA
RNAMS LA MKHAS PAR BSLAB CING SGRUB PA SNYING POR BYAS TE

For this reason we must be sure never to think lightly of any transgression we might commit, even down to the minor vows; we must absolutely keep all our vows just so. And so you must become masters in understanding all the various vows and advices related to whichever one of the eight sets of the vows of freedom you have assented to follow. And once you have learned them perfectly, well then you must *make them the essence of your practice*.

RANG RGYUD KYI SDOM PA 'DI NI STON PA'I SKU TSAB YIN SNYAM DU
BSAMS NAS BSLAB BYA RNAMS GCES SPRAS CHEN PO'I SGO NAS
BSRUNG BA SOGS LAM LHAG PA'I BSLAB PA GSUM TSUL BZHIN NYAMS
SU LEN NUS PAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS SHIG CES PA YIN GSUNGS,

This is what you are requesting, said our Lama, from your Lama in this verse. You are asking that he or she help you gain the strength to keep your vows perfectly; that you learn to think of the vows contained within your being as the true representative of the Buddha himself, inside you; that you love and cherish your vows, and always hope to defend them. You are asking, he said, to be *granted* the ability to follow the way of this and the other extraordinary trainings, exactly as they were meant to be.

OPEN STEPS FOR THOSE OF GREATER CAPACITY

VII. Developing the Wish for Enlightenment

GSUM PA SKYE BU CHEN PO'I LAM GYI RIM PAR BLO SBYANG BA LA
GNYIS LAS, DANG PO BYANG CHUB TU SEMS BSKYED PA'I TSUL NI,

This brings us to the third and final part of the advices on how to take the essence of this life: how lastly to train one's mind in the Steps of the path for persons of greater spiritual capacity. Here too there are two divisions. The first is how to develop the Wish for enlightenment, and is presented in the single verse of the root text which follows.

,RANG NYID SRID MTSOR LHUNG BA JI BZHIN DU, ,MAR GYUR 'GRO BA
KUN KYANG DE 'DRA BAR, ,MTHONG NAS 'GRO BA SGROL BA'I KHUR
KHYER BA'I, ,BYANG CHUB SEMS MCHOG 'BYONGS PAR BYIN GYIS
RLOBS, ,ZHES PA'I {SHI}OO KA GCIG GSUNGS,

(7)

**I have slipped and fallen
Into the sea
Of this suffering life;
Bless me to see
That every living being,
Every one my own mother,
Has fallen in too.
Grant me then
To practice this highest
Wish for enlightenment,
To take on myself
The task of freeing them all.**

DE YANG DPA' BYIN GYIS ZHUS PA'I MDO LAS, ,BYANG CHUB SEMS KYI
BSOD NAMS GANG , ,DE LA GAL TE GZUGS MCHIS NA, ,NAM MKHA'I
KHAMS NI KUN BKANG STE, ,DE NI DE BAS LHAG PAR 'GYUR,

Now the Sutra that Viradatta Requested says,

Were the merit of the Wish for enlightenment
To take on some kind of physical form
It would fill the reaches of space itself A
nd then spill over farther still.⁷²

,ZHES DANG , SPYOD 'JUG LAS, ,DGE BA GZHAN KUN CHU SHING BZHIN
DU NI, ,BRAS BU BSKYED NAS ZAD PAR 'GYUR BA NYID, ,BYANG CHUB
SEMS KYI LJON SHING RTAG PAR YANG , ,BRAS BU 'BYIN PAS MI ZAD
'PHEL BAR 'GYUR, ,ZHES SOGS DANG ,

The book called The Bodhisattva's Life too has lines like the following:

All the other
Kinds of virtue
Are like a bamboo tree;

They give their fruits
And then they always
Die and go away.

But the Wish For Buddhahood
Is an evergreen that always

Gives forth its fruits,
And instead of fading
Flourishes even more.⁷³

JO BO CHEN POS, ,THABS GOMS DBANG GIS BDAG NYID KYIS, ,GANG GIS
SHES RAB RNAMS BSGOMS PA, ,DES NI BYANG CHUB MYUR DU 'THOB,
,BDAG MED GCIG PU BSGOMS PAS MIN,

The Great Lord has also spoken:

Those great beings
Who meditate
On the method,

And so upon
The various kinds
Of wisdom,

Achieve then
Enlightenment
With speed.

It cannot be done
By meditating
On no-self-nature alone.⁷⁴

,ZHES PA DANG , RJE BLA MA RANG NYID KYIS KYANG , ,SEMS BSKYED
THEG MCHOG LAM GYI GZHUNG SHING STE,

Our Lord Lama himself says finally,

The Wish for enlightenment
Is the central beam
That holds up every path
Of the way which is supreme.⁷⁵

,ZHES SOGS PHAN YON MTHA' KLAS PA GSUNGS PA LTAR RANG RES
SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG ZHIG 'DOD PHYIN CHAD BYANG CHUB
KYI SEMS BSKYED PA 'DI MED THABS MED,

We can see from these and other works that the fine qualities of the Wish for enlightenment are limitless. From the first moment that you and I decide we are going to try to reach the state of a Buddha, this Wish for enlightenment is something we can never do without.

'DI YOD NA YON TAN GZHAN GANG YANG MED KYANG RGYAL BA'I
SRAS ZHES BYA BA'I MING THOB CING , THEG CHEN PA'I GRAL DU
TSUD,

The minute we reach this state of mind, even if we have no other admirable qualities at all, we win the title of "Son (or Daughter) of the Buddha." We also then enter the ranks of people who live the greater way.

SEMS 'DI MED PAR BDAG MED PA'I LTA BA BSGOM PA SOGS YON TAN
GZHAN JI 'DRA YOD KYANG 'TSANG RGYA RGYU LTA CI, THEG PA CHEN
PO'I GRAL DU'ANG MI CHUD PAS NA, BYANG CHUB TU SEMS BSKYED PA
GAL CHE,

If though we lack this great Wish, then it doesn't matter how many great virtues we might possess--abilities like being able to meditate on the ultimate view, where we see that things have no nature of their own. We still won't be able to join the ranks of those on the greater way, much less reach enlightenment. And

so the Wish is vital.

DE LA SKYES BU CHUNG 'BRING SKABS NGAN SONG DANG 'KHOR BA'I
SDUG BSNAL RANG STENG DU BSGOMS PAS NGES 'BYUNG SKYES YOD
TSE,

In the sections where we trained ourselves in the steps that are shared with practitioners of lesser and medium capacity, we meditated on the sufferings of the lower realms, and of the entire circle of life, but relative only to ourselves. In this way we developed the virtue of a healthy disgust for the kind of life we live.

'DIR GZHAN STENG DU KHA SPOS TE BSAMS NA SNYING RJE SOGS SKYE
BA 'ONG BAS, BYANG CHUB LAM RIM LAS GSUNGS PA LTAR GYI MAN
NGAG RGYU 'BRAS BDUN MA DANG , BDAG GZHAN MNYAM BRJE'I SGO
NAS BLO RIM GYIS SBYANGS TE,

Here you take the same thoughts and transfer them--you try to feel them relative to the condition that others are in. Then compassion and the other attitudes will start to grow within you; train your mind thus in the proper progression, using either the "seven-part, cause-and-effect instruction," or else the practice called "exchanging self and others," following these methods as the books on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood describe them.⁷⁶

SEMS BSKYED KYI MYONG BA SNE ZIN TZAM SKYES PA SOGS NAS SMON
'JUG GI SEMS CHO GAS BZUNG BA SOGS LA SLOB PA DGOS,

You must train yourself in all the relevant details; an example would be committing yourself through formal rituals to the Wish as a prayer and to the Wish as actual action, once you had reached a point such as finding your first strong feelings of familiarity with the Wish.

DES NA GZHUNG 'DIS BSTAN PA'I DON YANG , RANG NYID SRID PA STE
'KHOR BA SDUG BSNAL GYI RGYA MTSO GTING DANG MTHA' MI
MNGON LA, LAS NYON DANG SKYE RGA NA 'CHI'I RBA KLONG DRAG
TU 'KHRUGS PA'I NANG DU LHUNG NAS,

The meaning of the root text here then is as follows. I myself *have slipped and fallen into the sea* of the pain of *this suffering life*; that is, I have dropped into the ocean of the circle of births. I cannot even guess how deep it is, nor how far its edges lie. The great sea-waves of my deeds and the afflictions of my mind, of

birth and getting old and death, rage around me.

SDUG BSNAL GYI SDUG BSNAL, 'GYUR BA'I SDUG BSNAL, KHYAB PA
'DU BYED KYI SDUG BSNAL GSUM GYI CHU SRIN GDUG PA CAN DU
MAS DUS RTAG TU GTZES TE SDUG BSNAL BZOD DKA' BAS BAR
MTSAMS MED PAR MNAR BA JI LTA BA DE BZHIN DU,

A great host of ruthless creatures living in the water rise up and attack me constantly; these are the three sufferings--the suffering of outright pain, the suffering of pleasure that changes, and the suffering of simply being alive. They rip at me, they torture me, relentlessly, unceasingly.

TSE RABS THOG MA MED PA'I DUS NAS DRIN CHEN PO'I SGO NAS YANG
DANG YANG DU BSKYANGS PA'I MAR GYUR PA'I 'GRO BA KUN TE

And the same thing is happening to *every* other *living being*. *Every one* of them has in the past been *my own mother*; in the beginningless string of lives I have lived through, they cared for me and sheltered me, with incredible kindness.

SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYANG DE DANG 'DRA BAR SDUG BSNAL DU
MAS NYAM THAG PA'I TSUL MTHONG NAS, DE LTA BU'I 'GRO BA RNAMS
GZHAN LA RAG MA LAS PAR RANG NYID GCIG PUS SDUG BSNAL
RGYU DANG BCAS PA LAS SGROL, BDE BA THAMS CAD DANG LDAN
PAR BYED PA'I KHUR 'KHYER ZHING , LHAG PAR SANGS RGYAS KYI GO
'PHANG LA'ANG BDAG RANG GIS DGOD SNYAM DU,

I must learn to see how all these fellow beings *have fallen in too*, how they have been thrown down into misery by this mass of suffering. And then I must resolve *to take upon myself the task of freeing them all* from every pain, and from every cause of pain. I must assure they reach every form of happiness. I will do it myself, alone, without waiting or depending on anyone else. Beyond everything, I myself will see to it that every one of them climbs to the state of a Buddha.

MA RGAN SEMS CAN RNAMS BDE BAS PHONGS SHING SDUG BSNAL
GYIS MNAR BA LA CHES MI BZOD PA'I BYAMS PA DANG SNYING RJE
SHUGS DRAG POS KUN NAS BSLANGS PA'I BYANG CHUB SEMS MCHO
BCOS MA MA YIN PAR GOMS PA YONGS SU RDZOGS PA'I BLO STAN
THOG 'DI GA RANG DU 'BYONGS PA'AM SKYE NUS PAR GSOL BA BTAB
PA YIN GSUNGS,

In short, said our Lama, we are asking our Lama for the ability to find fierce feelings of love and compassion, states of mind where we can bear not a moment longer to watch our fellow, mother beings live so bereft of happiness, and so plagued by suffering. We are asking that these feelings inspire in us the *highest* aspiration, the true and uncontrived *Wish for enlightenment*. And we are asking our Lama for the ability to meditate upon this Wish, and *practice* it, and make it totally perfect, right here, on this very seat, before we stand up again.

VIII. General Training in Bodhisattva Activities

GNYIS PA SEMS BSKYED NAS SPYOD PA LA SLOB PA'I TSUL LA GNYIS,
MDO PHYOGS LA SLOB TSUL DANG , SNGAGS PHYOGS LA SLOB TSUL LO,
DANG PO MDO PHYOGS KYI SPYOD PA LA SLOB PA'I TSUL LA'ANG
GNYIS LAS, DANG PO SPYOD PA SPYI LA SLOB TSUL NI,

With this we have reached the second division to the instruction on how to train one's mind in the Steps of the path for persons of greater spiritual capacity. This division covers training yourself in the activities of a bodhisattva, once you have managed to achieve the Wish for enlightenment just described.

Our discussion proceeds in two parts: training in the open half of the bodhisattva activities, and training in the secret half of the bodhisattva activities. The former has two steps as well; the first of these explains how to train oneself in the activities as a whole, and is presented in a single verse of the root text.

,SEMS TZAM BSKYED KYANG TSUL KHRIMS RNAM GSUM LA, ,GOMS PA
MED NA BYANG CHUB MI 'GRUB PAR, ,LEGS PAR MTHONG NAS RGYAL
SRAS SDOM PA LA, ,BRTZON PA DRAG POS SLOB PAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS,
,ZHES PA'I {SHI}OO KA GCIG STE,

(8)

**Bless me to see clearly
That the Wish itself
Is not enough,
For if I'm not well trained
In the three moralities,
I cannot become a Buddha.
Grant me then
A fierce resolve**

**To master the vows
For the children of the Victors.**

DE LTAR SNGAR BSHAD PA BZHIN SEMS CAN GYI DON DU SANGS
RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG THOB PAR BYED SNYAM PA'I SEMS TZAM ZHIG
BSKYED PAR BYAS KYANG , SEMS BSKYED NAS RGYAL SRAS KYI SDOM
PA BZUNG STE SPYIN SOGS PHAR PHYIN DRUG LA MA BSLAB PAR
'TSANG RGYA BAR MI 'GYUR LA,

Suppose you are able, as described above, to reach *the Wish* for enlightenment, where you truly hope to achieve the state of a Buddha in order to help every living being. This *itself is not enough*. Once you do reach the Wish, you must still take on the vows of these bodhisattva princes and princesses, these sons and daughters of the victorious Buddhas. And then you must train yourself in giving and the other five perfections. Otherwise there is no way you could ever come to enlightenment.

DES NA 'DIR PHAR PHYIN DRUG TSUL KHRIMS RNAM PA GSUM DU
BSDUS TE GSUNGS PA HA CANG GNAD CHE STE,

This fact explains why it is so very important when holy beings have said that all six perfections⁷⁷ are covered in the three types of morality.

SPYIR SER SKYA GANG YIN YANG NGES PAR BSRUNG DGOS PA'I BSRUNG
BYA THUN MONG BA MI DGE BCU SPONG GI TSUL KHRIMS LEGS PAR
BSRUNG BA'I

The first type is called the "morality of keeping oneself from committing wrong." Here you begin by being extremely careful to keep the morality of avoiding the ten bad deeds.⁷⁸ This type of good behavior is common to everyone, whether they wear the robes or not, and must absolutely be maintained.

THOGBYE BRAG TU RANG RANG GIS SO THAR, BYANG SEMS, GSANG
SNGAGS TE SDOM PA GSUM GANG KHAS BLANGS PA DE DANG DE'I
BCAS MTSAMS DANG 'GAL BA'I NYES PAS NAM YANG MA GOS PA'I
THABS LA NAN TAN CHEN PO'I SGO NAS 'BAD PAR BYED PA NYES
SPYOD SDOM PA'I TSUL KHRIMS,

More specifically, with this first type of morality, you must in addition exert yourself to the fullest, so to assure that your life is never sullied in the least by

overstepping the bounds of any of the vows you have agreed to keep. Here we refer to vows that belong to any of the three traditional sets: the freedom vows, the bodhisattva vows, and the secret vows.⁷⁹

BSOD NAMS DANG YE SHES TE TSOGS GNYIS KYIS BSDUS PA'I DGE RTZA
RLABS PO CHE RNAMS THABS SNA TSOGS KYI SGO NAS RANG RGYUD
LA SDUD PAR BYED PA DGE BA'I CHOS SDUD PA'I TSUL KHRIMS,

The second type of morality is known as the "morality of collecting goodness." This is where you use a great variety of means to gather or collect extremely potent stores of virtue into your being; these are the virtues of amassing merit and wisdom.⁸⁰

SNGAR BSHAD PA'I SDOM PA'I TSUL KHRIMS DE RNAMS RANG DON YID
BYED KYIS MA BSLAD PAR SEMS CAN THAMS CAD KYI PHYIR RDZOGS
BYANG DON DU GNYER BA KHO NA'I CHED DU BSRUNG BA SEMS CAN
DON BYED KYI TSUL KHRIMS YIN PAS,

The third type of morality is the "morality that acts for every sentient being." Here you take care to keep the different varieties of morality mentioned above that involve restraining yourself from wrong; but instead of doing so with a motivation which is infected with any self-interest, you act only out of an intention to reach total Buddhahood for the sake of all living kind.

DE LTA BU'I TSUL KHRIMS RNAM PA GSUM LA GOMS SHING 'DRIS PAR
BYAS PA'I MYONG BA CHEN PO ZHIG MED NA, BLA NA MED PA YANG
DAG PAR RDZOGS PA'I BYANG CHUB KYI GO 'PHANG MI 'GRUB PAR
LEGS PAR MTHONG BA'INGES PA BRTAN PO RNYED NAS,

You must find a sure kind of knowledge where you *see clearly* how--if you lack a total fluency in *these three types of morality*, if you are *not well trained* and completely accustomed to following them--then you *cannot become* one of those who has reached the fully enlightened state of a *Buddha*.

RGYAL BA'I SRAS TE BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA'I SDOM PA BZUNG NAS
TSUL KHRIMS RNAM PA GSUM LA BRTZON PA SHUGS DRAG POS SLOB
NUS PAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS ZHES PA YIN GSUNGS,

Once you have found this knowledge, you must take on *the vows for the "children of the Victors"* (that is, the bodhisattva vows), and then with a *resolve of fierce*

intensity you must learn and *master* the three types of morality. What we are requesting of our Lama here, said our Lama, is that he or she *grant us* the ability to do so.

IX. Training in the Final Two Perfections

GNYIS PA PHAR PHYIN THA MA GNYIS LA SLOB TSUL NI,

Having presented the bodhisattva activities in general, we will now turn to the more particular description of how to train oneself in the final two perfections. This point is covered in the single verse of the root text which follows.

,LOG PA'I YUL LA G-YENG BA ZHI BYED CING , ,YANG DAG DON LA TSUL
BZHIN DPYOD PA YI, ,ZHI GNAS LHAG MTHONG ZUNG DU 'BREL BA'I
LAM, ,MYUR DU RGYUD LA SKYE BAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS, ,ZHES PA'I
{SHI}OO KA GCIG GIS BSTAN,

(9)

**Grant that I may quickly gain
The path where quietude
And insight join together;
One which quiets
My mind from being
Distracted to wrong objects,
The other which analyzes
The perfect meaning
In the correct way.**

DE YANG LOG PA'I YUL ZHES PA PHYIN CI LOG GI YUL LA BYA DGOS PA
DPER NA, PHYI ROL PAS RDEL SHING SOGS LA SEMS BZUNGS NAS TING
NGE 'DZIN BSGOM PA LTA BU STE, DE 'DRA'I SEMS PHYI ROL GYI LOG
PA'I YUL LA RNAM PAR G-YENG BA ZHI BA'AM MED PAR BYED CING ,

The verse here speaks of objects which are "wrong"; this should be understood as referring to objects which are mistaken, in a particular sense. One example would be trying to develop meditative concentration by fixing the mind on a short stick of wood, as some non-Buddhists advocate. We must seek to "*quiet*" the *mind*--that is, stop the mind--*from being distracted* to these types of *wrong*, external objects.

BOD KHA CIG LTAR YID BYED THAMS CAD BKAG STE NAG THOM ME
BAR GNAS PA LA ZHI GNAS DANG , DE THOG NAS, SEMS ZHES PA DE
DBYIBS DANG KHA DOG GANG DU GRUB 'DUG BRTAGS NAS MA RNYED
PA'I SEMS KYI KUN RDZOB PA'I NGO BO STONG SANG TZAM LA LHAG
MTHONG DU BSHAD PA LTA BU MIN PAR,

There are Tibetan schools of the past too which have taught that meditative quietude consisted of not thinking about anything at all, just keeping the mind in some dark state of dullness. The high state of perfect insight then they explain as moving in this stupor to a realization of the pure and simple emptiness of the deceptive nature of the mind--except they describe this emptiness as what you come to when you analyze whether or not what we call the "mind" consists of any shape or color, and then fail to find that it's any such thing.

RGYAL TSAB BYAMS PA'I DBUS MTHA' RNAM 'BYED KYI MAN NGAG RJE'I
LAM RIM CHE CHUNG SOGS LAS GSUNGS PA LTAR

But none of these ideas is correct; rather, we must follow texts such as the briefer and more expanded explanations of the Steps to the path composed by the Lord himself, where he presents the instructions given by the Great Regent, Loving One, in his own work entitled *Separating the Middle and the Extremes*.

NYES PA LNGA SPONG ZHING , GNYEN PO 'DU BYED BRGYAD BSTEN
PA DANG , YID BYED BZHI DANG LDAN PA'I SEMS GNAS PA DGU RIM
BZHIN BSGRUBS TE,

These treatises describe how one progresses in steps by eliminating the five problems to meditation, taking the eight corrective actions, and achieving the nine mental states, complete with their four different modes.⁸¹

DGE BA'I DMIGS RNAM GANG RUNG ZHIG LA RTZE GCIG TU BZHAG PAS
LUS SEMS SHIN SBYANGS KYI DGA' BA DES DRANGS PA'I ZHI GNAS
DANG ,

One thus attains a kind of bliss, a total pliancy of body and mind, which comes from staying in one-pointed meditation on any virtuous object one chooses. This then leads to what we call meditative *quietude*.

YANG DAG STE, BDAG MED PA'I DON LA SO SOR RTOG PA'I SHES RAB

KYIS TSUL BZHIN DU DPYOD CING , DPYAD MTHAR RNYED PA'I NGES
SHES KYI DON LA MNYAM PAR 'JOG PA'I DPYAD 'JOG ZUNG DU 'BREL BA
LA BR TEN NAS BYUNG BA'I LUS SEMS SHIN SBYANGS KYI BDE BAS ZIN
PA'I LHAG MTHONG BSGOM PA BCAS

The phrase "*perfect meaning*" here in the verse refers to a particular object: the fact that nothing has any nature of its own.⁸² A kind of wisdom used for examining the nature of something *analyzes* this object *in* a certain *correct way*, and by the end of its analysis comes to a definite conclusion. The mind stays in meditation upon this truth, such that the analysis and a fixation on this object *join* and work *together*. This brings on a feeling of bliss that fills the mind completely--and one has thus achieved what we call "*perfect insight*."

DE LTA BU'I ZHI GNAS DANG LHAG MTHONG YA MA BRAL BAR
NYAMS SU BLANGS PA LA BR TEN NAS ZHI LHAG ZUNG 'BREL GYI
RTOGS PA KHYAD PAR CAN MYUR BA NYID DU RGYUD LA SKYE BAR
BYIN GYIS RLOBS SHIG CES GSOL BA BTAB PA'O,

We seek to practice this process, where quietude and insight are no longer separated one from the other. When we recite the verse we are asking our Lama to *grant that*, as a result, *we may quickly gain* within our minds that exceptional form of realization where meditative quietude and perfect insight join together.

SECRET STEPS FOR THOSE OF GREATER CAPACITY

X. Entering the Way of the Diamond

GNYSIS PA SNGAGS PHYOGS KYI SPYOD PA LA SLOB PA'I TSUL LA GSUM,
RGYUD SNOD RUNG DU BYAS NAS DBANG BZHI RNAM PAR DAG PA
NOS TE RDO RJE'I THEG PA LA 'JUG PA, DBANG DUS KYI KHAS BLANGS
PA'I DAM TSIG DANG SDOM PA DAG PAR BYA TSUL, DAM SDOM LA
GNAS NAS LAM RIM PA GNYIS BSGOM PA'I TSUL LO, DANG PO NI,

This brings us to the second part of our discussion about the activities of a bodhisattva: training oneself in the secret half of these endeavors. Here there are three different Steps: how to enter into the Way of the Diamond by making oneself a worthy vessel and then receiving a pure form of the four empowerments; how to keep pure the pledges and vows that one took on when he received the empowerments; and how to meditate upon the two stages of this path, as one continues to maintain his pledges and vows. The first of these three is presented in the single verse of the root text which follows.

,THUN MONG LAM SBYANGS SNOD DU GYUR PA NA, ,THEG PA KUN GYI
MCHOG GYUR RDO RJE'I THEG,SKAL BZANG SKYE BO'I 'JUG NGOGS
DAM PA DER, ,BDE BLAG NYID DU 'JUG PAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS, ,ZHES PA'I
{SHI}OO KA GCIG GSUNGS TE,

(10)

**Grant that once I've practiced well
The paths shared and become
A vessel that is worthy,
I enter with perfect ease
The Way of the Diamond,
Highest of all ways,
Holiest door to come inside
For the fortunate and the good.**

DE LTAR MDO SNGAGS GNYIS KA LA MED DU MI RUNG BAI THUN
MONG BAI LAM GYI RIM PA SPYI DANG , KHYAD PAR DU NGES 'BYUNG
BYANG SEMS YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA STE LAM GYI GTZO BO RNAM
GSUM GYI RGYUD LEGS PAR SBYANGS TE BYANG CHUB KYI SEMS
SHUGS DRAG TU SKYES PA SNGON DU SONG NAS GSANG SNGAGS LA
'JUG RUNG GI SNOD DU GYUR PA DE'I TSE NA,

You must first have *practiced well* the general Steps of *the path* which are "*shared*" by both the open and the secret teachings; that is, which are so important for both that you could never succeed without them. More specifically, you must have trained your mind well in the three principal paths: renunciation, the Wish for enlightenment, and the correct view of reality.⁸³ On top of this you must have as your motivation a very fierce desire to reach enlightenment for the sake of every living being. These then make you a *vessel that is worthy to enter* the Way of the Secret Word.

'BRAS BU LAM DU BYED PA SOGS YOD PA'I CHA NAS NYAN THOS DANG
RANG RGYAL DANG BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA'I THEG PA KUN GYI
MCHOG TU GYUR PA GSANG SNGAGS RDO RJE'I THEG PA LA 'JUG DGOS
SHING ,

When this time has come you must surely enter the "*Way of the Diamond*"; which is to say, this Way of the Secret Word. It is the *highest of all* the "*different ways*"--

the ways of the listeners, the self-made Buddhas, and the bodhisattvas.⁸⁴ What makes the Diamond Way higher is that it has certain unique features, such as using the goal of practice as a path to the goal.

RDO RJE'I SKAD DOD BADZR ZHES PA DBYER MI PHYED PA LA 'JUG PAS
NA, RDO RJE NI NGES DON GYI THUGS RDO RJE LTA BU'I TING NGE
'DZIN NAM, THABS BDE BA CHEN PO DANG SHES RAB STONG PA NYID
GNYIS DBYER MI PHYED PA'I YE SHES DE NYID YIN LA,

The Tibetan word for "diamond" here is *dorje*. This is a translation of the Sanskrit word *vajra*--a term that has the basic meaning of "inseparable." The "diamond" here is the actual diamond of the holy mind of the Buddha; that deep state of meditation which can only be compared to a diamond. You can also say it refers to that one type of wisdom which is the inseparable combination of what we call "method" (great bliss) and "wisdom" (emptiness).

THEG PA ZHES PA BZHON PA'I MING STE, RDO RJE'I THEG PA ZHES
PA'ANG RDO RJE'I BZHON PA ZHES PA LTA BUR YOD PAS, PHAR PHYIN
THEG PAR SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG GRANGS MED GSUM GYI YUN
LA SGRUB DGOS PHYIR BZHON PA MED PAR RKANG THANG GIS BGROD
PA'I TSOD TZAM DU 'GOR BA YIN ZHING ,

The word for "way" here has a meaning of "conveyance"--something you get on and ride to reach a destination. The "diamond way" mentioned here is thus a kind of "diamond conveyance" as well. In the way of the perfections, one must carry on his practice for three "countless" eons in order to reach Buddhahood.⁸⁵ This takes so long that it's almost as if you were walking on foot, rather than travelling on any sort of conveyance.

GSANG SNGAGS RDO RJE'I THEG PA LA BR TEN NA DE LTAR MI DGOS
PAR ZUNG 'JUG GI GO 'PHANG SNYIGS DUS KYI TSE THUNG GCIG GAM,
LO GSUM PHYOGS GSUM TZAM GYI RING LA 'THOB PAR BYED NUS PAS
RTA BZANG PO BANG RTZAL CAN ZHON PA LTAR 'TSANG RGYA BA'I
THABS HA CANG ZAB CING MYUR LA,

If though you use the Diamond Way, the Way of the Secret Word, no such length of time is needed: you can attain the state of secret Buddhahood, Union, in the length of but one lifetime--even in one of the very short kinds of life that we have here now, in the age of degeneration. In fact it's possible to reach Buddhahood in no more than three years and three months. This way then is a method which is

incredibly deep and quick; more like riding a fine racehorse.

NYAN THOS DANG RANG SANGS RGYAS RNAMS KYIS RANG NYID GCIG
PU'I ZHI BDE DON DU GNYER BAS GZHAN DON KHUR DU 'KHYER BA'I
SKAL BA DMAN PA DANG , BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA' RNAMS KYIS NI
RANG BDE YAL BAR DOR NAS, GZHAN DON 'BA' ZHIG LA ZHUGS TE
DON GNYIS MTHAR PHYIN PA'I SANGS RGYAS KYI GO 'PHANG SGRUB
PA'I SKAL BA BZANG PO DANG LDAN PA YIN PAS,

The kinds of practitioners that we call "listeners" and "self-made Buddhas" aspire only to reach a state of blissful peace, and this too only for themselves. They are deficient therefore in that fortunate kind of good virtue that makes one want to take on the burden of helping others. Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, disregard completely their own comfort and work only for the good of others. They are full of the wonderful fortune and goodness that enables them to reach the state of a perfect Buddha, and the ability to fulfil, totally, the ultimate needs of both others and themselves.

DE LTA'I SKAL BZANG SKYE BO BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA' RNAMS KYI
'JUG NGOGS TE LAM LA 'JUG PA'I SGO DAM PA'AM MCHOOG TU GYUR PA
GSANG SNGAGS RDO RJE THEG PA'I DBANG BZHI LEGS PAR NOS PAS
SKU BZHI'I SA BON THEBS NGES SU BYAS TE GSANG SNGAGS BLA MED
RDO RJE THEG PA'I LAM ZAB MO DE LTA BUR BDE BLAG NYID DU 'JUG
NUS PAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS SHIG CES PA YIN GSUNGS,

What is the "*holiest*" (meaning highest) *door*, or gateway, for bodhisattvas; for these people who are so *fortunate and good--to come inside* this path? It is receiving the four empowerments of the Diamond Way, the Way of the Secret Word, and receiving them perfectly, so that they are sure to plant the seeds for the four bodies of a Buddha.

What we are requesting in this verse then, said our Lama, is that our Lama grant us the ability to enter, *with perfect ease*, the profound path just described: the Way of the Diamond, the unsurpassed form of the Secret Word.

XI. Keeping Vows and Pledges Pure

GNYIS PA DBANG DUS KYI KHAS BLANGS PA'I DAM TSIG DANG SDOM
PA DAG PAR BYA BA'I TSUL NI,

With this we have reached the second Step to training oneself in the secret half of the bodhisattva activities; that is, how to keep pure the pledges and vows that one took on when he received his secret empowerment. This Step too is presented in a single verse of the root text:

,DE TSE DNGOS GRUB RNAM GNYIS 'GRUB PA'I GZHI, ,RNAM DA DAM
TSIG SDOM PAR GSUNGS PA LA, ,BCOS MA MIN PA'I NGES PA RNYED
GYUR NAS, ,SROG DANG BSDOS TE BSRUNG BAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS, ,ZHES
PA'I {SHI}OO KA GCIG GIS BSTAN CING ,

(11)

**Bless me to know
With genuine certainty
That when I've entered thus,
The cause that gives me
Both the attainments
Is keeping my pledges
And vows most pure.
Grant me then
To always keep them
Even if it costs my life.**

DE YANG GSANG SNGAGS RDO RJE THEG PA'I SNOD RUNG DU GYUR
NAS DBANG BZHI LEGS PAR THOB PA DE'I TSE,

Now suppose *you have entered thus*--you have made yourself a vessel which is worthy of the Diamond Way, the Way of the Secret Word; and you have received, in the proper manner, the four different empowerments. If you then follow the correct method you can gain *both the attainments*: the one we call the "ultimate," and the one we describe as "shared."

MCHOG GI DNGOS GRUB MI SLOB PA'I ZUNG 'JUG RGYAL BA RDO RJE
'CHANG GI GO 'PHANG DANG ,

The ultimate attainment is reaching secret Union, where there is nothing more to be learned. This is the state of the Victorious One, the Keeper of the Diamond.

RAL GRI, MIG SMAN, RKANG MGYOGS, RI LU, SA 'OG, MI SNANG BA,
BCUD LEN,

MKHA' SPYOD KYI DNGOS GRUB BCAS GRUB PA CHEN PO BRGYAD LA
SOGS PA'I THUN MONGS GI DNGOS GRUB STE

The shared attainments are those such as the "eight great attainments." These include the special powers known as the sword, the eye ointment, swift feet, the pill, passing underground, disappearing, taking essence, and sky walking.⁸⁶

DNGOS GRUB RNAM PA GNYIS GANG LAS SGRUB PA'I GZHI'AM, BR TEN
SA LTA BU NI DBANG GI DUS SU GANG KHAS BLANGS PA'I RTZA BA
DANG YAN LAG GI DAM TSIG DANG SDOM PA MTHA' DAG RNAM PAR
DAG PAR BSRUNG BA NYID YIN PAS,

What then is it that can *give* you these attainments? Their *cause* or foundation, the very support that holds them all up, is one thing, and only one: to *keep most pure* every one of the root and secondary *pledges and vows* which you took upon yourself when you were granted the empowerments.

BYANG SEMS KYI RTZA LTUNG BCO BRGYAD DANG , NYES BYAS ZHE
DRUG, GSANG SNGAGS KYI RTZA LTUNG BCU BZHI DANG , SBOM PO
BRGYAD, GZHAN YANG RIGS LNKA SPYI BYE BRAG GI DAM TSIG RNAMS
TSUL BZHIN BSRUNG DGOS SHING ,

We must therefore honor and keep, just as we are required, the various vows and pledges. For the bodhisattva vows, this means never committing any of the eighteen root downfalls, or the forty-six secondary violations. For the secret vows, it involves avoiding perfectly the fourteen root downfalls and the eight serious offenses, while being sure to honor the general and also the individual pledges of the Five Classes.

DE YANG , MI SHES PA, MA GUS PA, BAG MED PA, NYON MONGS MANG
BA STE LTUNG BA 'BYUNG BA'I SGO BZHI PO MA BKAG PAR BSRUNG MI
NUS,

You will never be able to protect all your pledges and vows unless you manage to slam shut the four doors through which the downfalls make their appearance. These four are ignorance, disrespect, carelessness, and particularly severe mental afflictions.

DE DGAG PA'I TSUL NI, LTUNG BA 'BYUNG TSUL RNAMS SHES PA, LAS

'BRAS BSAMS NAS BSLAB PA LA GUS PA, RGYUN DU DRAN PA DANG
SHES BZHIN LA GNAS PA, NYON MONGS GANG SHAS CHE BA'I GNYEN
PO BSTEN PA RNAMS YIN CING ,

To keep these doors closed we must, respectively, learn and know when and how a downfall occurs. We must contemplate the laws of actions and their consequences, thereby gaining a deep respect for the various instructions on how to keep these commitments. We must remain in a constant state of recollection and watchfulness. Finally, we must employ the antidote that will work against the particular mental affliction that happens to be our own most serious problem.

BYANG SEMS DANG SNGAGS KYI BSLAB BYA'I SKOR RNAMS RJE TZONG
KHA PA CHEN PO'I GSUNG BYANG SEMS BSLAB BYA BYANG CHUB
GZHUNG LAM DANG , GSANG SNGAGS KYI RTZA LTUNG RNAM BSHAD
DNGOS GRUB SNYE MA SOGS DANG ,

As for where to find instructions on the vows and pledges, you can use a number of works by the Lord, Tsongkapa. Some examples would be his treatise called *Highway to Buddhahood* for advice on the bodhisattva vows, or the *Golden Harvest of Attainments* for a complete explanation of the root downfalls in the secret vows.

NYUNG MTHAR SDOM GSUM BSLAB BYA NOR BU'I 'OD 'PHRENG DANG ,
SNGAGS BYANG SEMS KYI BSLAB BYA'I SDOMS TSIG LTA BU BSLAB BYA
RGYAS BSDUS CI LCOGS LAS NGES PAR BYAS TE BSRUNG DGOS,

At the very least you should study the book of advices on the three sets of vows known as the *String of Shining Jewels*, or one of those summaries in verse that teach about the secret and bodhisattva vows.⁸⁷ Use any of these presentations, brief or long, according to the time you have available to you; come to a firm understanding of each of the vows and pledges, and then at all costs keep them.

DE LTAR BSRUNGS TE DAM SDOM LA TSUL BZHIN DU GNAS PA ZHIG
BYUNG PHYIN CHAD LAM BSKYED RDZOGS BSGOM PA SOGS LA 'BAD PA
CHEN PO MA THUB PAR TSE 'DIR SA LAM MTHAR PHYIN PA MA BYUNG
YANG ,

Let's say you are able to keep your vows and pledges as described--you live your life in proper accordance with them all. Certain results will follow then, even if you find yourself unable to make great efforts in practices such as meditation on

the stages of creation and completion, and so therefore fail during this life to reach the final end of the various paths and levels.

DAM TSIG DANG SDOM PA DAG PAR GYUR PA'I STOBS KYIS SKYE BA
BRGYUD MAR SNGAGS SPYOD PA'I RTEN KHYAD PAR CAN 'THOB CING ,
RDO RJE SLOB DPON MTSAN LDAN DANG MJAL, GSANG SNGAGS KYI
LAM NYAMS SU LEN NUS PA SHA STAG TU GYUR TE

The immense power of the purity of your pledges and vows will lead you over the string of your future lives to attain a very special kind of life, where you can practice the secret teachings. You will always meet an authentic Diamond Master--one who teaches you the secret way. And you will always find yourself able to put the secret paths into actual practice.

SKYE BA BDUN NAM, DMA' MTHA'ANG SKYE BA BCU DRUG TSUN CHAD
DU NGES PAR 'TSANG RGYA BAR STON PA RDO RJE 'CHANG GIS GSANG
BA'IMDZOD KYI RGYUD LAS,

As such you will, without a doubt, be able to reach total enlightenment within seven lifetimes, or in sixteen at the very most. On this our Teacher, the Keeper of the Diamond, has spoken the following in the Tantra *of the Treasure of Secrets*:

,DBANG BSKUR YANG DAG SBYIN LDAN NA, ,SKYE DANG SKYE BAR
DBANG BSKUR 'GYUR, ,DE YIS SKYE BA BDUN LA NI, ,MA BSGOMS PAR
YANG DNGOS GRUB THOB,

If the person is granted
A pure empowerment,

Then life after life
Will the power be given.

Within seven lives
The goal is reached,

Even if the person
Does not meditate.

,GANG LA BSGOM PA DANG LDAN ZHING , ,GAL TE DAM TSIG SDOM LA
GNAS, ,SKYE 'DIR LAS DBANG GIS MA 'GRUB, ,SKYE BA GZHAN DU

DNGOS GRUB THOB,

But those who keep The meditation, And further maintain Their pledges and
vows Will reach the goal Within this life or, Past deeds preventing, At least in the
next.⁸⁸

,CES DANG , RNAM GROL ZLA BAS, ,MA BSGOM SGYUR KYANG LTUNG
MED NA, ,SKYE BA BCU DRUG DAG NA 'GRUB,

Vibhuti Chandra says as well,

Even should he fail to meditate,
A person will reach the goal
Within the length of sixteen lives,
So long as a downfall has not occurred.⁸⁹

,CES PA DANG , DAM TSIG LNGA PA LAS KYANG , ,GAL TE LTUNG BA
MED GYUR NA, ,SKYE BA BCU DRUG DAG NA 'GRUB,

The *Book of the Five Pledges* concurs:

As long as there is no downfall,
The goal is reached in sixteen lives.⁹⁰

,CES SOGS GYUD DANG GRUB CHEN DU MAS LAN CIG MA YIN PAR
GSUNGS PAS, DE 'DRA'I BKA' BSLU BA MED PA LA BCOS MA MIN PA'I
NGES PA'AM YID CHES BRTAN PO GZHAN YIS BSGYUR DU MI BTUB PA'I
GTING PHYIN PA RNYED PAR GUR NAS SROG DANG BSDOS

You must come to *know* these facts *with genuine certainty*--that is, you must seek a
kind of firm belief in them that is deeply rooted within you, so much that no one
else could ever change your mind. And because of this knowledge you must then
protect your commitments, "*even if it costs your life.*"

ZHES PA DPER NA, MU STEGS PA DANG KLA KLO LTA BU MI BSRUN PA'I
SKYE BO SDIG PO CHE ZHIG GIS, KHYOD SDOM PA DAM THIG 'DI TSO MI
BSRUNG RGYU KHAS MA BLANGS NA DA LTA RANG GSOD NGES YIN
ZHES ZER TE TSUL KHRIMS BLOS MA BTANG NA GSOD PAR THAG CHOD
PA ZHIG TU GYUR KYANG ,

What would it be to cost your life? Imagine for example some follower of a non-Buddhist religion, or some kind of barbarian, who was really very cruel, very evil. And suppose he came up to you and said, "If you don't agree not to keep those pledges and vows of yours, then I swear I will kill you, this very instant." Suppose it were completely decided: either you reject this morality, or you die.

NGAS TSUL KHRIMS 'DI YAL BAR BOR NA KHOS MA BSOD KYANG SKYE
BA GTAN GYI 'DUN MA SHI TSAR BA YIN PAS GSON KYANG SHI BA
DANG KHYAD PAR MED LA, TSUL KHRIMS BSRUNG NA TSE RABS GTAN
DU BDE BAR 'GYUR BAS DE BSRUNG BA'I DON DU DA LTA KHOS GSAD
K YANG RUNG STE

At the "cost of your life" then your choice would go like this. If I discard my morality now he will spare me; but the ultimate hope of my infinite lifetimes will be murdered instead. It's really the same as being killed myself. If though I can keep my morality I will reach the happiness that I've lived all these lives to find. So if to keep my morality now I must let him kill me, then let it be so. I will never give up these morals.

TSUL KHRIMS BLOS MI GTONG SNYAM DU SROG 'DOR BA DANG TSUL
KHRIMS NYAMS PA GNYIS SNGA MA RANG LA 'DAM STE, RANG GIS TSE
'DIR GCES SHOS SU BYED PA'I SROG LAS KYANG DAM TSIG DANG SDOM
PA LA GCES SPRAS LHAG PAR DU TSE BAR BYAS TE DAM SDOM TSUL
BZHIN DU BSRUNG NUS PAR BYIN GYIS RLOBS ZHES PA'O,

In short, if it comes down to choosing between giving up your life, and letting this morality degenerate, you had surely better choose the first. The one thing here in this birth that you cherish above all else is your own life. What you are requesting from your Lama is that he or she grant you the power to always keep your vows and pledges properly; that you reach a point where you cherish these commitments infinitely more than your own precious life. XII. Meditating on the Two Secret Stages

GSUM PA DAM TSIG DANG SDOM PA LA GNAS NAS LAM RIM PA GNYIS
BSGOM PA'I TSUL NI,

This brings us to the third Step to training oneself in the secret half of the bodhisattva activities, which is how to meditate upon the two stages of this path, while one continues to maintain his pledges and vows. This Step too is presented in a single verse of the root text.

,DE NAS RGYUD SDE'I SNYING PO RIM GNYIS KYI, ,GNAD RNAMS JI
BZHIN RTOGS NAS BRTZON PA YIS, ,THUN BZHI'I RNAL 'BYOR MCHOG
LAS MI G-YEL BAR, ,DAM PA'I GSUNG BZHIN SGRUB PAR BYIN GYIS
RLOBS, ,ZHES PA'I {SHI}OO KA GCIG STE,

(12)

**Bless me next
To realize precisely
The crucial points
Of both the stages,
The essence of
The secret ways.
Grant me then
To practice as
The Holy One has spoken,
Putting all my effort in
And never leaving off
The Practice of the Four Times,
Highest that there is.**

DE LTAR DAM SDOM LA GNAS PA'I 'OG TU JI LTAR BYA DGOS SNYAM
NA, RGYAL BA'I DBANG PO BSKAL BZANG RGYA MTSOS, ,LAR SKYE 'CHI
BAR DO GANG LA YANG , ,DUS DA LTA'I BAG CHAGS GTZO CHE BAS, ,DE
SPYOD BYED BSKYED RDZOGS RNAL 'BYOR GYIS, ,SKYABS SKU GSUM
RANG NGO SHES BAR MDZOD,

One may wonder, "Suppose I am able to maintain my vows and pledges; what must I do after that?" The highest of Victors, Kelsang Gyatso, has spoken the following:

The point
May be birth or death or the state between them.

The time
Most important for planting their seeds is now.

The way
To transform them is the practice of creation and completion.

The refuge

You must learn is the three final bodies themselves.⁹¹

,CES GUNGS PA BZHIN SNGAR BSHAD PA DE LTA BU'I GSANG SNGAGS
KYI DAM TSIG DANG SDOM PA MTHA' DAG TSUL BZHIN DU BSRUNG
BA'I THOG NAS, RGYUD SDE RGYA MTSO'I SNYING PO,

What's being said here is that, first of all, you must continue to keep each and every one of the secret vows and pledges, as explained above. Then you must practice the very *essence* of the great *sea of the secret ways*. Here first is the stage of creation, which is exemplified by a number of methods.

THA MAL GYI GNAS LUS LONGS SPYOD PHUNG KHAMS SKYE MCHED
SOGS LA RANG GA BAR 'DZIN PA'I THA MAL GYI SNANG ZHEN DANG ,
SKYE SHI BAR DO THA MAL PA RNAMS KYANG

We tend to see things in an ordinary way, we take them to be no more than what they seem to us; we tend to grasp this way to the place where we live, to our own body, to the things we own and use, and to things like the parts that make up us, and the world: what we call the "heaps," the "categories," and the "doors of sense."⁹² We have also always had to undergo an ordinary birth, ordinary death, and ordinary passage between death and birth.

RGYAL BA'I SKU GSUM DU 'KHYER BAS MTSON TE, GANG SHAR SNANG
GRAG RIG GSUM GZHAL YAS KHANG DANG LHA DANG BLA MA'I SGYU
'PHRUL DAG PA RAB 'BYAMS 'BA' ZHIG TU 'CHAR BAR BYED PA'I LAM
BSKYED PA'I RIM PA DANG ,

In the stage of creation we transform all these seemingly ordinary things and events; we turn them into the three bodies of a victorious Buddha.⁹³ We take whatever presents itself to us: all that appears to our eyes, all that reaches our ears, and all that comes in our thoughts, and we make it show itself as total and absolute purity, as a galaxy of perfection, as great celestial mansions, as holy angels, as a magical dance put on by our Lamas.

RTZA RLUNG BSGOM PA TZAM LA CHED CHER BYAS TE GTUM MO PHAL
PA 'BAR BA TZAM DANG , SEMS GSAL RIG GI NGO BO MTHONG BA
TZAM LA LAM MTHON BOR 'KHRUL BA LTA BU

As for the stage of completion, some mistakenly equate it with concentrating

solely on a meditation that involves the various channels and winds, and which results in achieving a rather ordinary kind of inner heat. Others make the error of thinking it is some high spiritual path when you succeed in nothing more than perceiving how the essence of the mind is that it is aware and knowing.

MA YIN PAR, KUN RTOG LAS RLUNG GI RGYU BA MTHA' DAG DBU MA'I
NANG DU ZHUGS GNAS THIM GSUM BYAS PA LAS BYUNG BA'I GNYUG
SEMS 'OD GSAL LHAN CIG SKYES PA'I YE SHES KYI MTHUS GANG SNANG
BDE STONG GI ROL BAR 'CHAR BA'I RNAL 'BYOR

The real stage of completion though is not like this; rather, you take the various winds which course through the body because of one's ordinary conceptual thinking, and redirect them all into the central channel--in a three-fold process of entrance, residence, and absorption. As a result a primal state of mind arises, the clear light, the wisdom which is simultaneous. And the power of this wisdom makes all of existence appear as the play of bliss and emptiness.

SOGS YANG DANG YANG DU GOMS PA'I MTHAR, SKU THUGS ZUNG 'JUG
KHYAB BDAG RDO RJE 'CHANG GI GO 'PHANG MNGON DU BYED PA'I
LAM RDZOGS PA'I RIM PA STE

In the path of the stage of completion then we meditate over and over on this and related practices, until finally we are able to bring about the Union of the holy body and holy mind: we reach the state of the Lord of the Secret World, the Keeper of the Diamond.

RIM PA GNYIS KYI LAM LA LEGS PAR SLOB PA ZHIG DGOS PAS, DE DAG
JI LTAR NYAMS SU LEN TSUL GYI GNAD DON RNAMS PHYIN CI MA LOG
PAR RGYUD DANG GRUB CHEN GYIS BKRAL BA'I DGONGS PA JI LTA BA
BZHIN DU LEGS PAR RTOGS NAS,

All this makes it clear why we must study, and study well, the path that includes *both the secret stages*. We will have *to realize* all the crucial points of how to actually carry out these two stages. Our understanding must be unerring; it must conform *precisely* with the true intent of Teacher, as revealed in the secret texts, and the explanations of great and accomplished masters.

BRTZON PA STE BRTZON 'GRUS THANG LHOD RAN PAR RGYUN MI
'CHAD DU BSTEN PA YIS, THO RANGS DANG , SNGA DRO, PHYI DRO,
SROD KYI THUN TE THUN BZHI'I RNAL 'BYOR GYI NYAMS LEN LA

MCHOG TU SPYOD PA NYID LAS DUS RTAG TU MI G-YEL BA'AM MI 'DA'
BAR 'BAD CING ,

Then we must *put forth all our efforts*; that is, we must exert ourselves continually and steadily, to the proper degree--not overdoing it, and not underdoing it. These efforts should go towards following the Practice of the Four Times of the day: daybreak, morning, afternoon and the early night. We must make this practice the single *highest activity that there is* in our lives, and try *never to leave off* doing it.

DE YANG RMONGS ZHEN GYIS BCOS PA'I RANG BZO'I RDZUN CHOS
DANG , LAM LOG LAM GOL, BON DANG MU STEGS SOGS KYI BSLAD PA

Now there are false teachings that some persons simply make up on their own, out of an ignorant desire for gain. There are paths that are absolutely backwards, and there are paths that will lead you astray. There are paths that are infected by mistaken concepts from an old local religion, or from some non-Buddhist faiths of ancient India, or anything of the like.

MA ZHUGS PAR, DAM PA ZHES PA, NAM YANG MI SLU BA'I SKYES BU
TSAD MA, THUN PA SANGS RGYAS BCOM LDAN 'DAS LA BYED PAS, DE'I
GSUNG RAB LAS BYUNG BA'I MAN NGAG JI LTA BA BZHIN DU SGRUB
NUS PAR GSOL BA BTAB PA YIN GSUNGS,

What we are requesting of our Lama here, said our Lama, is that he or she *grant us* the power never to wander onto one of these paths. We are asking for the strength to practice, in exactly the proper way, the instructions found in the highest of *spoken* words. And these are the teachings of the "*Holy One*" mentioned in the verse. These words refer to a person who can never deceive us; a being who is incapable of lying; that ultimate meditator who keeps the practice of the times: they refer to the victorious, transcendent Buddha.

THE CONCLUSION XIII. A Request for Good Circumstances

RTZA BA'I GSUM PA LAM SGRUB PA'I MTHUN RKYEN 'GRUB PA DANG
'GAL RKYEN ZHI BAR GSOL BA 'DEBS PA NI,

This brings us to the third major division of the text, which is a request so that we can attain all the favorable conditions for succeeding in the path, and also

stop all those circumstances that might keep us from success. This request is contained in the single verse of the root text which follows.

,DE LTAR LAM BZANG STON PA'I BSHES GNYEN DANG , ,TSUL BZHIN
SGRUB PA'I GROGS RNAMS ZHABS BRTAN CING , ,PHYI DANG NANG GI
BAR DU GCOD PA'I TSOGS, ,NYE BAR ZHI BAR BYIN GYIS BRLAB TU GSOL,
,ZHES PA'I {SHI}OO KA GCIG GSUNGS,

(13)

**Bless me, grant me that
The spiritual Guide
Who shows me this good road,
And all my true
Companions in this quest
Live long and fruitful lives.
Bless and grant me that
The rain of obstacles,
Things within me
Or outside me
That could stop me now,
Stop and end forever.**

DE YANG LAM LA PHYIN CI MA LOG PA DANG , LAM GOL BA DANG ,
LAM NOR BAR SHOR BA SOGS BZANG NGAN SNA TSOGS YOD CING ,
RANG CAG GIS NYAMS SU BLANG BYA'I LAM DE LAM BZANG PO MA
NOR MA 'KHRUL BA ZHIG LA MA ZHUGS NA, 'KHRUL BA'I LAM PHYIN
CI LOG CIG LA LO STONG DU SGRUB PA BYAS KYANG 'BRAS BU BZANG
PO MA 'KHRUL BA 'BYUNG BA GTAN NAS MI SRID LA,

So there are these different sorts of spiritual paths, of widely varying quality: some are totally correct, some are totally wrong, some slide off from right to wrong, and on and on. You and I have access to a path which is pure, and unmistakable, and free of any error. We can either enter it now or go off on some wrong road that goes astray. If this second is our choice then we can try to follow such a way for a thousand years, but it is an absolute impossibility that we will derive from it any good or certain result.

DE DAG KYANG RGYAL MCHOE LINGA PA CHEN POS, ,GUR KUM TSOS
KYIS BTZOS PA'I {lv}A BA'I ZHVAS, ,RANG RIGS BSTAN PA ZIN NA CHES

LEGS KYI, ,PHA MAS LUNG DANG RTOGS PA'I KHYAD NOR TSOGS,
,RNAM G-YENG RKUN POR SHOR BA'I LAG STONG MANG ,

The Great Fifth Dalai Lama has said,

It's quite nice when you consider
A teaching to be of your school
When the Lama who teaches it wears
A silk cap with the saffron stain.

But remember many are robbed
By the thief of wandering thoughts,
Left empty-handed of riches,
The unique word and the realizations
Passed down the Family line.⁹⁴

,ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR BKA' RNYING SOGS DANG DGE LUGS KYI
KHYAD PAR ZHVA DMAR SER TZAM GYIS 'BYED NA MA GTOGS, GZHAN
MA'I LUNG RTOGS KYI BSTAN PA'I ZAB KHYAD 'DON RGYU MED NA,
DGE LDAN PA'I ZHABS DRANGS PA YIN PAS,

These lines describe people in our school whose knowledge is so little that the only difference they can see between followers of traditions such as the Lineage of the Word or the Ancient Ones, and the tradition of the Virtuous Way, is that some wear lama hats which are red and others wear caps of yellow. People like this are unable to cite a single one of the unique, profound features that distinguish the physical word and the mental realizations of our teachings from those of the other traditions. These people are a disgrace to our school.

BSREGS BCAD BRDAR BA'I GSER BZHIN DU DAG THER LEGS PAR MDZAD
PA'I RING LUGS GSER ZHUN MA LTA BU 'DI 'DRA DANG DA RES LAN CIG
TZAM MJAL BA 'DIR MJAL GO CHOD PA BYED DGOS PAS NA,

Don't let yourself be one of these. For once in your many lifetimes you have met up with a truly pure system, a school like purified gold. The beliefs that it teaches have been perfectly refined and assayed, like gold that has been through the fire, the shears, and the file. These tests have been carried out with endless hardships by our Gentle Protector, Tsongkapa the Great, who has delivered to us this precious essence of the teachings of the powerful beings of Enlightenment.

LTA SPYOD RNAM PAR DAG PA'I RANG LUGS KYI BSHES GNYEN TSAD LDAN BSTEN CING , GZHUNG CHEN BKA' POD LNGA LA THOS BSAM MTHIL PHYIN PA BYAS TE BDEN GNYIS KYI RNAM GZHAG PHYIN CI MA LOG PAR GTAN LA 'BEB,

We have met with this system, and we must see that a real meeting takes place. We must find and take ourselves properly to a spiritual Guide, one who is truly qualified, and who follows our tradition perfectly in both his viewpoint and his practice. We should undertake to study the five great classics, the five great volumes of the Word, and bring this study to its final end, thereby coming to a firm and accurate understanding of how the two levels of reality work.⁹⁵

LAM THABS SHES YA MA BRAL BAR NYAMS SU LEN TSUL LA SGRO 'DOGS GCOD TSUL SHING RTA CHEN PO'I BZHED SROL DRI MA MED PAR RJE BLA MA YAB SRAS RJES 'BRANG BCAS KYIS LEGS PAR BKRAL BA'I GZHUNG LUGS SNYAN BRGYUD KYI MAN NGAG DANG BCAS PA LEGS PAR NOS TE THOS BSAM SGOM GSUM YA MA BRAL BA ZHIG BYUNG NA,

We must examine and resolve every question about how to put into practice within our own lives that path where method and wisdom are ever inseparable. We must, in short, ask for and receive teachings on the immaculate system of the greater way; we must learn the various clarifications of these teachings by our Lord Lama and his spiritual Sons, and by those who have come after them; and we must hear the private advices passed along in the oral tradition. And then finally we should use the traditional method to master these teachings, in the three steps of learning, contemplation, and meditation, each one always combined with the others.

'BRAS BU BZANG PO SANGS RGYAS KYI SAR 'GRO BA LAS GZHAN DU 'KHYOGS MED PAS LAM BZANG PO ZHES PA DE LTA BU LA BYA DGOS,

If we do all this we will win a good goal, for we will have found what the verse calls the "good road": the path that leads to the land of Enlightenment, the path that never wanders someplace else.

DES NA GONG DU ZHUS ZIN PA LTAR GYI MDO SNGAGS ZUNG 'BREL GYI LAM BZANG PO NYAMS SU LEN PA'I MTHUN RKYEN BLO LAS SU RUNG BA SOGS DANG , KHYAD PAR LAM DE STON PAR MDZAD PA'I BLA MA DGE BA'I BSHES GNYEN DANG , DES JI LTAR BSTAN PA'I DON MTHA' DAG TSUL BZHIN SGRUB PA'I CHOS MTHUN GYI GROGS TSAD LDAN

RNAMS

To succeed like this, to actually carry out the path described above--such a good road in the way it combines the open and secret teachings--we will first need to achieve the various conditions that are favorable for us. We'll need to reach the state where our mind is perfectly pliable, and other such qualities. Most of all we will need *a spiritual Guide who can show us this road, and companions in the quest--* genuine friends of a like mind, who are *true* in keeping each and every one of the Teacher's instructions.

ZHABS ZUNG RDO RJE'I RANG BZHIN DU BRTAN CING ,

The first thing we are asking our Lama to grant us then is that these true friends *live long and fruitful lives*, that their two legs remain planted here on earth with the immutability of a diamond.

'GAL RKYEN GYI GTZO BO PHYI'I BAR GCOD RGYAL PO CHOS BZHIN DU MI SPYOD CING , GZHAN YANG CHOS BYED LA DGRA LDANG BA SOGS CHOS LAM DU MI GTONG BA DANG ,

Secondly we are requesting our Lama to bless and grant us, that every last bit of *the rain of obstacles* which could ever appear might *stop and end forever*. The first kind of obstacles are those *things outside of us that could stop us now* from reaching our spiritual goals; the main ones would be living in a country where the leaders behave in contradiction to the Dharma--or where they refuse to allow people to enter the Way--by fighting against religion, or the like.

NANG GI BAR CHAD LUS LA NAD DANG GDON SOGS KYIS GTZES SHING , RANG GI RGYUD DGE BA LA BKOL DU MI RUNG BAS MTSON TE PHYI NANG GI BAR DU GCOD PA'I TSOGS MTHA' DAG NYE BAR ZHI BAR BYIN GYIS BRLAB TU GSOL, ZHES GSOL BA BTAB PA YIN,

The second type of obstacles are those that are *within*; examples here would be things like illnesses and harmful spirits that attack your body, or a mental inability to direct your thoughts towards virtuous objects any way you want.

'DI DANG GONG DU BSHAD PA RNAMS KYI DMIGS RIM DANG , BDUD RTZI 'BEB SBYANG BYA TSUL SOGS MAN NGAG GI GNAD MANG DU YOD PA RNAMS LAM RIM GYI DMAR KHRID RGYAS PA'I SKABS LTAR SHES DGOS PA YOD GSUNGS,

Our Lama noted lastly that for this and the preceding sections there were a good number of essential points covered in traditional advices: what visualizations to perform at each point, how to bring down a flow of nectar to purify oneself, and so on. He said that we should learn these by referring to descriptions found in the more detailed, practical presentations of the Steps of the path.

XIV. A Prayer for Future Care

BZHI PA SKYE BA THAMS CAD DU BLA MAS RJES SU GZUNG STE SA LAM
GYI 'BRAS BU MNGON DU BYED NUS PAR SMON PA NI,

We have come now to the fourth and final section in the text of the "Source of All My Good." This is a prayer that, in all our future lives, we may be taken under the care of a Lama, and so gain the strength to reach the end of the various levels and paths. Here again the point is covered in a single verse of the root text:

,SKYE BA KUN TU YANG DAG BLA MA DANG , ,BRAL MED CHOS KYI
DPAL LA LONGS SPYOD CING , ,SA DANG LAM GYI YON TAN RAB
RDZOGS NAS, ,RDO RJE 'CHANG GI GO 'PHANG MYUR THOB SHOG,CES
PA'I {SHI}OO KA GCIG GIS BSTAN,

(14)

**In all my lives
May I never live
Apart from my perfect Lamas,
May I bask
In the glory
Of the Dharma.**

**May I fulfill
Perfectly
Every good quality
Of every level and path,
And reach then quickly
The place where I
Become myself
The Keeper of the Diamond.**

DE YANG SKYE BA 'DI DANG SKYE BA GZHAN KUN TU, YANG DAG PA
STE DGE BA'I BSHES GNYEN MTSAN NYID DANG LDAN PA BLA MA BLO
BZANG THUB DBANG RDO RJE 'CHANG CHEN PO DANG DUS SKAD CIG
KYANG 'BRAL BA MED PAR,

The verse says, *in all my lives*--that is, in this and in all my future lives to come--*may I never live apart from my Lamas*, may I never spend a moment without them. These Lamas are "*perfect*": they are spiritual Guides who have all the right qualifications; they are the great Lama Lobsang, Lord of the Powerful, who is the Keeper of the Diamond.

MDO SNGAGS SAM, LTA SPYOD KYI GDAMS PA ZAB CING RGYA CHE
BA'I CHOS KYI DPAL 'BYOR LA NGOMS PA MED PAR LONGS SPYOD CING,

And in these lives *may I bask in the glory of the Dharma*: may I seek unceasingly to drink of the Dharma either in the sense of the open and secret teachings, or the teachings that are "deep" and "wide"--the instructions on correct view and living the life of a bodhisattva.

BLA MAS JI LTAR BSTAN PA LTAR GYI LAM GYI RIM PA RNAMS NYAMS
SU BLANGS PA LA BR TEN NAS SA BCU DANG LAM LNGA'I YON TAN MA
LUS PA RAB BAM MCHO G TU GYUR PA STE LEGS PAR RDZOGS NAS,

May I then put into actual practice all the Steps of the path, exactly as these Lamas have taught me to do. If I can do so then I will *fulfil* each and *every good quality of the ten levels and the five paths*.⁹⁶ And I will fulfil them just right, which is to say *perfectly*, or to the highest degree which exists.

BLA MA BLO BZANG THUB DBANG RDO RJE 'CHANG GI GO 'PHANG TSE
'DI NYID DAM, DMA' MTHA' SKYE BA BDUN NAM, BCU DRUG NAS MA
'GYANGS PAR MYUR DU THOB PA'I SKAL BA CAN DU 'GYUR BAR SHOG
CIG, CES SMON LAM BTAB PA STE,

And may I reach then the place where I become myself the Lama, Lobsang, Lord of the Powerful Buddhas, the *Keeper of the Diamond*. May I do so *quickly*: in this very life, or at least within seven lifetimes, or no more than sixteen.

Make thus a prayer that you can have the virtuous fortune to make all this come true.

SKYE BA KUN TU SOGS KYI TSIGS BCAD 'DI YON TAN GZHIR GYUR MA'I
MJUG GI BKA' RTZOM MIN YANG ,

This verse, the one that begins with the words "In all my lives," does not appear at the end of the original text of the *Source of All My Good*. Nonetheless, said our Lama, there is a reason why it is added here in conclusion, and why I have given an explanation of it.⁹⁷

RANG RES BSNGO SMON BYA SA'I YUL LA, DGE BA 'DI YIS SKYE BO KUN, ,
ZHES SOGS LTA BU SANGS RGYAS 'THOB PA'I RGYUR BSNGO BA,

Generally speaking, there are three different objects that you and I can pray for: three goals towards which we can dedicate the power of a great good deed such as the practice we have just completed. The first is to dedicate our virtuous act so that it might turn into a cause for us to achieve Enlightenment. An example of this kind of dedication would be the verse which starts with the line, "By this virtue may all beings..."⁹⁸

RGYAL SRAS SMON LAM G{NGg}A'A'I KLUNG RNAMS NI, , ZHES SOGS
LTA BU BSTAN PA RGYAS PA'I RGYUR BSNGO BA,

We can secondly dedicate our good deed to become a cause for the teachings to spread in the world. A typical verse here would be the one that starts with "The prayers of bodhisattva princes, as many as the drops of water in the Ganges..."⁹⁹

STON PA BLA NA MED PA'I BSTAN PA DANG , , ZHES SOGS LTA BU BLA
MAS RJES SU 'DZIN PA'I RGYUR BSNGO BA STE GSUM LAS,

The third way to dedicate a great goodness is so that it brings ourselves and others to be taken under the care of a Lama. Here there are verses like the one with the line about the "matchless Word of the Teacher."¹⁰⁰

BLA MAS RJES SU BZUNG NA SNGA MA GNYIS RANG SHUGS KYIS 'ONG
BAS NA, 'DIR PHYI MA LTAR BYED PA BSNGO SMON GYI SDOMS CHEN
PO YIN PAS, RANG PHYOGS KYI MKHAS GRUB GONG MA MANG PO'I
GSUNG RGYUN PHYAG BZHES LTAR MJUG THOGS 'DIR SBYAR NAS
BSHAD PA YIN GSUNGS,

Once a Lama has taken us into his or her care, the other two goals come then of their own accord. For this reason, any verse dedicated to the third kind of goal is

a brief and powerful combination of both dedication and prayer. And this is why the custom prescribed by a great many wise and accomplished saints of our past lineage has been to attach this verse at the end of the work.

DE LTAR 'JAM MGON TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO'I THUGS BCUD, CHOS
PHUNG BRGYAD KHRI BZHI STONG GI YANG SNYING RJEN PAR
PHYUNG BA LTA BU TSIG NYUNG LA DON 'DUS PA'I GDAMS PA KHYAD
PAR DU 'PHAGS PA BYIN RLABS SPUNGS ZHUS SU GRAGS PA'I BSHAD PA
SA BCAD MA STONGS TZAM LEGS PAR PHUL ZIN PA YIN PAS, BLO GROS
MCHOG DMAN TSANG MAS,

And so I have finished fully offering up to you all this my explanation of the lines known as the *Begging for a Mountain of Blessings*. It is but a brief explanation, barely enough to avoid losing the basic outline.

This Mountain of Blessings contains the cream of the holy thoughts of our gentle protector, the great Tsongkapa. It is an extraordinary instruction; it packs a tremendous amount of meaning into but a very few words. In a sense it rips open and lays bare the innermost heart of all the 84,000 great masses of teachings delivered by the Buddhas.

SNGAR GONG DU ZHUS PA LTAR RJE BLA MAS BYANG RVA SGRENG
RGYAL BA'I DBEN GNAS KYI DGON PA GONG DU LAM MCHOG SGO
'BYED DANG YON TAN GZHIR GYUR MA 'DI BKA' RTZOM DANG GSOL
'DEBS MDZAD PAS LAM RIM BLA MA BRGYUD PA YONGS RDZOGS KYI
ZHAL GZIGS, BYANG CHUB LAM RIM GYI BSTAN PA NYIN MO LTAR
GSAL BAR MDZAD PA SOGS BSTAN 'GRO'I DON RLABS PO CHE GNANG
RGYU'I RTEN 'BREL GYI SGO MANG PO BYE STE 'PHRIN LAS NAM MKHA'
DANG MNYAM PAR BYUNG BA'I RNAM THAR GYI RJES SU 'BRANGS NAS
BYANG CHUB LAM GYI RIM PA'I BSTAN PA RANG GZHAN GYI RGYUD
LA RGYAS PAR MDZAD PA'I PHYIR DU

As I mentioned above, the works called *Open Door to the Highest Path* and the *Source of All My Good* were composed by our Lord Lama and delivered as a supplication above the hermitage of the Victor, near the monastery of Radreng, which stands to the north.¹⁰¹

Once he had made his supplication, the precious Tsongkapa found himself face

to face with each and every Lama of the lineage of the teachings on the Steps on the path to Buddhahood. At the same moment many auspicious signs occurred which portended how the Lord would elucidate these same teachings, making them as clear to us as the Sun in the sky. These and other great deeds would he perform, deeds both powerful and effective in furthering the teachings and the needs of living beings.

Each and every one of us here, those of great intellect and those of lesser, must all emulate the life of the Lord Lama, whose mighty activities spread as far as space itself does. We must do whatever we can to see that these instructions on the Steps of the path to Buddhahood take root and flourish within the minds of ourselves and others.

SBYOR CHOS DANG DGA' LHA SOGS KYI SGO NAS BSAGS SBYANG GSOL
'DEBS NAN TAN BYED PA SNGON DU BTANG ,

To accomplish this we must first carry out certain preliminaries: we must collect the power of great good deeds, clean ourselves of our past bad deeds, and make a request to our Lamas for strength. For this we will need a practice, something like the text called the *Preliminary Practices*, or else the *Thousand Angels*.¹⁰²

NYUNG MTHA' YANG GZHUNG 'DI TZAM GYI TSIG DON LA 'DRIS PAR
BYAS TE, BSHAR SGOM GYIS BAG CHAGS 'JOG PA TSUN LA NAN TAN DU
'BAD PA DANG ,

At the very least we should acquaint ourselves thoroughly with the meaning of the verses of this very brief work. We must make great efforts in a wide variety of related practices, beginning with review meditation to plant desirable seeds in the stream of our mind.

THU'U BKVAN CHOS KYI NYI MA'I GSUNG LAS, THOS RGYU'I CHOS DE
GANG , DE THOS PA'I TSUL JI LTAR ZHE NA, CHOS NI BLANG DOR GYI
GNAD LA TSAD MAR GYUR PA SANGS RGYAS NYAG GCIG YIN PAS

Remember here the words of Tuken Chukyi Nyima:

What is the Dharma we should learn? And how are we to learn it? There is one and only one being who sees with perfect accuracy each and every crucial point of what we should take up and what we should abandon; this being is the Buddha.

DES GSUNGS PA'I MDO RGYUD NAS BSHAD PA'I NYAMS LEN GYI GNAD
MA TSANG BA MED PAR STON PA JO BO'I LAM SGRON DANG , DE'I
DGONGS 'GREL LAM RIM CHE CHUNG LTA BU SOGS LA THOS PA BYA YI,

Therefore the Dharma that we choose to learn should be the Lamp of the Path by Lord Atisha, and works like the longer and shorter presentations of the Steps which clarify his true intent. The reason is that these instructions present in their totality the keys which the Buddha himself taught in the open and secret teachings, for actually carrying out the Dharma in one's own life.

GZHAN DU NA SA LAS THON PA SKAD DANG , GNAM LAS BABS PA
SKAD DANG , PHA MES KYI SNYAN BRGYUD NAS BYUNG BA SKAD PA'I
SHOG DRIL CHANG CHUNG TZAM 'PHRAL DU THOS NAS SHES KYANG

It's true that we could choose a different way and devote ourselves in the short term to learning all those weird little scraps of Dharma that somebody supposedly found under the ground, or supposedly fell out of the sky into somebody's lap, or supposedly got handed down by word of mouth from some ancestors of ancient times.

PHUGS SU BSLU BA'I CHOS CAN LAS MA 'DAS PAS DE'I RGYU MTSAN
GYIS MID LA DANG , KHYUNG PO SOGS TSAD LDAN GYI SKYES BU DAM
PA GONG MA 'GA' ZHIG GIS KYANG DANG POR DE LTA BU'I CHOS LTAR
SNANG RE GSAN KYANG RJES SU KHYI LUD LTAR DOR NAS 'TSANG
RGYA BA'I CHOS LOGS SU 'TSOL DGOS BYUNG BA YIN NO, , ZHES DANG ,

In the long run though all these can only deceive us. This is precisely what happened with great holy beings of the past, authentic masters such as Milarepa and Kyungpo.¹⁰³ For a time they deigned to study such works, but later on they were forced to discard them like so much manure, and go on to seek a different Dharma, one that would actually make them enlightened.¹⁰⁴

LCANG SKYA ROL PA'I RDO RJE'I ZHAL NAS, ,SNGON BYON PA'I SANGS
RGYAS BGRANG YAS KYIS, ,CHOS ZAB DGU MANG DU GSUNGS LAGS
KYANG , ,RJE THUB PA'I DBANG PO'I GSUNG RAB KUN, ,DON MA TSANG
MED PAR GCIG BSDUS PA, LAGS KYANG , ,RJE THUB PA'I DBANG PO'I
GSUNG RAB KUN, ,DON MA TSANG MED PAR GCIG BSDUS PA,

This too we learn from the lips of Changkya Rolpay Dorje:

It's true that
In the past
Buddhas beyond all counting

Have spoken
Perfect Dharmas,
By the millions, in multitudes.

Yet where else
Is a book
Like the Steps to Buddhahood,

The eloquent
Instructions
Of the Lord, Lobsang Drakpa,

Where he
Takes all
The highest of words, the teachings

Of Buddhas of Power
And combines their intent
Into one, with nothing left out at all.

,BLO MCHOG DMAN KUN LA PHAN PA'I CHOS, ,LTA SGOM DANG SPYOD
PA MA 'KHRUL BA, ,KHONG BLO BZANG GRAGS PA'I LEGS PAR BSHAD,
,GZHUNG BYANG CHUB LAM RIM LAS GZHAN GANG , ,DE NYAMS LEN
MDZOD CIG SKAL LDAN DAG,CES PA DANG ,

His is a Dharma
That benefits all,
People of high intellect or lesser;

His is a Dharma
That never errs,
In its view, meditation, and activities too.

Let this then
Be your practice,
Those with the goodness to hear it.105

GUNG THANG BSTAN PA'I SGRON MES KYANG , ,SEMS DE LTAR CHOS
LA 'KHRUL BA NA, ,CHOS ZAB MO'I SGRA CAN MANG NA YANG , ,MGON
DUS GSUM RGYAL BA'I THUGS KYI BCUD, ,RJE BLO BZANG RGYAL BA'I
RING LUGS

And finally, Gungtang Tenpay Dronme has spoken too:

It may seem
There are many teachings they call "profound,"

But the mind
Settled down in the Dharma sees

That when you go
To take the essence of leisure and fortune,

Your savior will be
The cream of the thought of Victors of all three times:

The supreme tradition
Of the Lord, the Victor, Lobsang;

MCHOG,CHOS MDO SNGAGS BSHAD SGRUB ZUNG 'BREL GYI, ,LAM NGO
BO GRANGS DANG GO RIM SOGS, ,GNAD TSANG LA MA NOR YONGS
RDZOGS LA, ,DUS NYIN BZHIN BAG CHAGS CI THEBS KYIS,

Where every crucial point
Is absolutely complete, and without any error

The definitions, And divisions, and order, and all other details

Of the path
Where open and secret, teaching and practice combine.

,BSHAR SGOM LA NYAMS LEN DNGOS GZHIR BYAS, ,DE'I SBYOR DANG
MJUG GI RIM PA YANG , ,RJE BLA MA'I BKA' BZHIN LEGS BSGRUB STE,

,DAL 'BYOR LA SNYING PO LEN PAR 'TSAL,

For the main stage
Follow review meditation on these,

Every day that goes by
It will plant many seeds in your mind.

Follow as well
For the stages of starting and ending

Just what
Our Lord Lama has taught us to do.106

,ZHES SOGS GSUNGS PA LTAR RJE YAB SRAS RJES 'BRANG DANG BCAS
PA'I GSUNG DU MDO SNGAGS LAM GYI RIM PA RGYAS 'BRING BSDUS
GSUM JI 'DRA ZHIG DGOS KYANG

What these Lamas are telling us is that we have at our disposal whatever Dharma we need: we have the longer, and medium, and more brief presentations of the Steps to both the open and secret paths, all set out for us by the Lord, his spiritual Sons, and the various teachers who have followed them.

RIN PO CHE'I ZA MA TOG KHA PHYE BA LTAR LAG MA THOGS PA YOD
PAS, GZHAN GYIS CHOS SKAD ZAB ZAB MOR SGROGS PA'I SNYING PO
MED PA'I STONG 'UR LA 'GRAM CHU MI LDANG BAR

You have thus in your own two hands a great basket; the lid is wide open, and the basket brims with precious jewels. So don't let your mouth start watering every time you hear somebody spout some meaningless chatter about some new and very oh-so-very "profound" Dharma they've discovered.

RANG LUGS KYI MKHAS GRUB DU MA'I GZHUNG MAN NGAG DANG
BCAS PAR THOS BSAM SGOM GSUM GYI SGO NAS LAM RIM LA RTZOL
BCAS RTZOL MED KYI MYONG BA LEGS PAR BTON,

Rather take yourself through the great texts and special advices of the wise and accomplished masters of our own tradition, all in the proper order of learning, contemplation, and meditation. Get to a point where you are totally fluent in

all the Steps of the path, first by making a conscious effort, and then later in an effortless flow.

NGES 'BYUNG BYANG SEMS YANG DAG PA'I LTA BA, LAM RIM PA GNYIS
DANG BCAS PA'I NYAMS MYONG KHYAD PAR CAN RANG RANG GI
RGYUD LA RIM BZHIN BSKYED NAS,

Plant and nurture within your own mind, one by one, the various realizations such as disgust with this suffering life, and the wish to reach enlightenment for every living being, and the ultimate view of reality. Along with these then develop the path of the two secret stages. Work at them until you achieve an extraordinary level of personal experience in each.

DA RES DAL 'BYOR GYI RTEN BZANG LAN CIG RNYED PA'I SKABS 'DIR
DON MED DON CHUNG STONG LOG TU MA SHOR BAR

Right now you have found a body and life that have every spiritual leisure and fortune you could ever wish for. This is the only time all this could ever come together for you. Don't let it slip away. Don't waste it on things that are meaningless. Don't waste it on things that have only little meaning. Don't wait until you have lost it forever.

MKHA' KHYAB KYI 'GRO BA DRIN SHIN TU CHE BA'I MA RGAN NYAM
THAG PA'I SEMS CAN RNAMS KYI DON DU ZUNG 'JUG RDO RJE 'CHANG
GI GO 'PHANG RIN PO CHE DUS RING POR MI THOGS PAR 'THOB PA'I
THABS LA 'BAD DE

As far as space itself reaches, there live sentient beings who have been your mother. They are old and feeble, they live lives of desperation, and over the reaches of time they have lavished every kindness upon you. For their sake then you must now go and attain this precious gem, the state of secret Union, the being of the One who Keeps the Diamond.

DAL BA'I RTEN LA SNYING PO MCHOG TU LON PA ZHIG NGES PAR
MDZAD DGOS PA YIN GSUNGS,

Make haste, give it all your strength, follow the path given here, reach your goal. You must go now, said our Lama, go, and take the ultimate essence of this one good life you have.

,RGYAL KUN BGROD PA GCIG GYUR DRI MED LAM, ,BU RAM
SHING PA'I GSUNG RAB GCES RGU'I MDZOD, ,RGYAL TSAB MI
PHAM MGON DANG 'JAM PA'I DBYANGS, ,LAS 'ONGS ZAB MO'I
LTA DANG RGYA CHE'I GZHUNG ,

It is the one immaculate path
Travelled by each and every Victor;
It is a treasure of cherished jewels,
High words from the
One of the Sugarcane.107
It is the great book of teachings upon
Profound view and the far-reaching deeds
Come down to us from the royal Regent,
The Invincible Savior, and Gentle Voice.108

,KLU SGRUB YAB SRAS THOGS MED MCHED LA SOGS,
,SNGON MED SHING RTA CHE LAS LEGS BRGYUD PA,
,LHA GCIG PHUL BYUNG ZHABS DANG 'BROM STON
RJE'I, ,DRIN LAS GANGS CAN 'GRO BA'I DPAL DU
THOB,

It descended in a perfect stream
From the Father, Nagarjuna, and his Son;
From Asanga, the Brother, and others too,
Unprecedented from great innovators.109
Because of the kindness of one great
God Along with the Lord named Dromton Je,110
Those of the Land of Snow had the glorious
Fortune to obtain this teaching.

,LO PAn MKHAS GRUB DU MA'I DKA' BA BRGYAS,
,PHAGS YUL BKA' BSTAN BYE SNYED GANGS LJONGS
'DIR, ,DAR BA'I SROL BZANG SPEL BA RING ZHIG NAS,
,MI MKHAS BSLAD PAS 'GRIB LA MNGON DU PHYOGS,

Tibetan translators and Indian masters,
A crowd of wise and accomplished saints,
Undertook thousands of hardships to find

Millions of scriptures and commentaries
In the Land of the Realized; then here in Tibet
A noble tradition spread and grew,
Till many years later some without wisdom
Began to corrupt it; the sun nearly set.

,DE TSE 'JAM DPAL DBYANGS DNGOS TZONG KHA
PAS, ,THUB BSTAN YONGS RDZOGS MDO SNGAGS
LAM RIM GYI, ,SHING RTA'I SROL CHEN GSAR DU
PHYE BA'I TSE, ,THAR 'DOD SKYE RGU YONGS LA SKAL
BZANG BYIN,

Then came Tsongkapa, who was in truth T
he one called Soft and Glorious Voice.
He opened the way to a new innovation,
The magnificent system of teachings upon
The Steps to the path of all the open
And secret word of the Able Ones.
That day was a powerful blessing bestowed
On the fortunate masses who seek for freedom.

,KHYAD PAR GSUNG RAB KUN GYI SNYING PO ZHES,
,BSNGAGS PA DON LDAN MCHOG 'BRING DMAN PA'I
BLOR, ,TSAMS PA DE KO YANG DAG LAM STON
BSHES, ,BLANG DOR MA NOR LTA BA'I MIG KYANG
YIN,

Especially when they call this teaching
The "essence of the highest of words,"
Their praise has a point, for only it fits
The sharpest and middle and dullest of minds.

The Steps are too a spiritual Guide
Who shows the path that is totally pure,
They are eyes that let you see without fail
What things you should practice, and what to give up.

,ZAB RGYAS LAM GYI RIM PA'I GNAD BSDUS 'DI, ,MDO
RGYUD ZLA MED SMRA BA'I DRANG SRONG CHE,
,KHYAB BDAG BDE CHEN SNYING PO PHA BONG

KHA'I, ,DRUG CU'I DBYANGS LDAN DPAL GYI MGUR
LAS THON,

This brief abridgement of the keys
Of the deep and widespread Steps of the path
Was drawn from a song of experience
Sung in sixty most glorious tones¹¹¹
By a highly accomplished
Saint unmatched
In propounding the open and secret Word:
Pabongka, the Essence of Greatest Bliss,
Lord over all of his secret world.

,DE PHYIR LEGS BSHAD ZLA BA'I MA MA 'DIS, ,THUB
BSTAN DBANG GI RGYAL PO'I MDZOD BZUNG STE,
,DGA' LDAN LUGS 'DZIN KLU DBANG BYE BA'I SHUGS,
,MKHA' MNYAM PHAN BDE'I DPYID DU DAR GYUR

This excellent explanation then
Is like the mother of the moon,¹¹²
The treasure trove of a king of kings,
That holds in it all the Buddhas' Word.
By the strength of a trillion Lords of Serpents,
Who uphold the way of the Heaven of Bliss,¹¹³
May this teaching spread in a glorious spring
Bringing help and happiness far as space.

CIG,CES YON TAN GZHIR GYUR MA'I GSUNG BSHAD KYI BRJED BYANG
MDOR BSDUS SU BKOD PA 'DI YANG , KHYAB BDAG 'KHOR LO'I MGON
PO BKA' DRIN MNYAM MED RJE PHA BONG KHA PA RDO RJE 'CHANG
CHEN PO'I ZHAL SNGA NAS KYIS, CHU SPREL HOR ZLA BZHI PA'I TSES
NYER GNYIS NYIN DBEN GNAS BKRA SHIS CHOS GLING DU, 'GO LOG
BLA MA 'JAM DPAL ROL PA'I BLO GROS DPAL BZANG PO DANG , ZHOL
KHANG SRAS GANGS GI'A SPRUL SKU RIN PO CHE SOGS SKAL LDAN GYI
TSOGS PA SUM CU SKOR LA,

And so ends this very brief explanation of the *Source of All My Good*. It was compiled primarily from a series of notes taken on the 22nd day of the fourth month according to the Mongol system, in the year of the water monkey [1932],

at the retreat house known as Tashi Chuling.¹¹⁴

The notes are of a teaching delivered by that God of a Secret World, the Protector of All Around Him, the Lord, the Magnificent Keeper of the Diamond: Pabongka, whose kindness knows no equal. At the time he had consented to confer a secret initiation upon a group of some thirty very fortunate disciples, including among them the good and glorious Lama of Golok, Jampel Rolpay Lodru, as well as Ganggiu Trulku Rinpoche, the son of Sholkang.¹¹⁵

BDE MCHOG DRIL BU LUGS PHYI DKYIL LHA LNGA SOGS KYI DBANG
BKA' 'GA' SHAS SHIG GNANG BA'I SNGON DU 'DI'I BSHAD LUNG ZHUS
STZAL DANG ,

A number of empowerments and instructions upon them were given, centered on the Five Angels of the outer secret world, as well as other aspects of the secret practice of Highest Bliss, according to the tradition of Gantapada. The present explication was granted as the required preliminary to the initiation.

SKABS GZHAN DU RDO RJE 'CHANG NYID KYI DRUNG NAS ZAB KHRID
MDOR BSDUS 'GA' TZAM NOS PA'I RANG NYID KYI DRAN GSO'I BRJED
THO NYUNG NGU RE BTAB YOD PA RNAMS SLAD PHYOGS SGRIGS
BGYID 'DUN

There were also a number of other occasions on which we received brief but very profound instructions on this teaching directly from this very Keeper of the Diamond. For my own benefit, so that I would be able to retain these advices, I had taken down some brief notes and kept several sets of them in my possession. It had always been my intention to organize them into a single work at some later point in time.

THOGBLO BZANG RGYAL BA'I DBANG PO'I BSTAN PA BSTAN 'DZIN BLA
MA SLOB BRGYUD DANG BCAS PA LA MI PHYED DAD DAM ZLA MED
RDO RJE'I LHUN PO LTAR BRTAN PA'I YON GYI BDAG MO CHEN MO LHA
LCAM SKU NGO YANG 'DZOMS TSE RING MCHOG NAS, LHUN PO LTAR
BRTAN PA'I YON GYI BDAG MO CHEN MO LHA LCAM SKU NGO G-YANG
'DZOMS TSE RING MCHOG NAS,

The notes came to the attention of the esteemed Yangdzom Tsering, a high lady of noble family. She is one of the great religious sponsors of our land; her faith in the teachings of Lobsang, the King of Buddhas,¹¹⁶ and in the Lamas and

disciples who keep these teachings, is totally unbreakable, unequalled, unshakable as the diamond mountain at the center of the universe.

ZIN BRIS 'DI NYID SPAR BRKO ZHU RGYUR MA DPE 'PHRAL THON DGOS
TSUL GYI BSKUL MA NAN CHER GNANG BAR, GZHAN LA ZHU DAG
GZIGS 'BEB SOGS NYI 'PHRUL ZLA 'PHUL GYI YUN BGYANGS MA SPOBS
PAR,

This noble lady insisted vehemently that I should with all haste come out with a manuscript of the notes which would immediately be carved onto woodblocks and printed. This duty I undertook, not daring to drag my feet or delay the project even so long as it would take to offer the text to others for proofing, editing, and other such tasks.

RANG MNYAM BLO DMAN DAG LA'ANG PHAN 'DOD KYI BSAM PAS ZIN
THO KHAG DANG , RANG BLOR RE ZUNG NGES PA RNAMS LAS SNYING
PO'I CHA MTHA' DAG BREL RTAB KYIS LEGS PAR BTUS TE,

Along with this encouragement came a second motivation, which was my own desire to benefit fellow disciples whose intellect might be as feeble as the one I possess. And so in a great rush I have put together this treatise, combining together all my sets of notes, and the most essential points of whatever I myself was able to grasp with certainty from what he taught.

'DAN GRVA DGE MING PA BLO BZANG RDO RJES MA SPREL DBO ZLA'I
MAR GYI MKHA' 'GRO 'DU BA'I DUS BZANG POR YAB GZHIS LHA KLU
DGA' TSAL BA'I PHO BRANG DU MJUG GRUB PAR BYAS PA,

This labor was accomplished by myself, whose ordination name is Lobsang Dorje, and who hails from the monastery called Den. The writing took place at Ganden Palace, located on the estate of the family of Hlalu. The final pages were completed on the auspicious day of the Meeting of the Angels, during the waning of the moon in the month of wo, in the year of the fire monkey [1956].¹¹⁷

RGYAL BA GNYIS PA TZONG KHA PA CHEN PO'I MDO SNGAGS KYI
BSTAN PA'I SNYING PO DRI MA MED PA RANG GZHAN YONGS KYI
RGYUD LA RGYAS PAR BYED NUS PA'I RGYUR GYUR CIG , ,

I pray that this good deed may act as a cause that will give me the strength to further within my own and all other beings' minds the immaculate essence of the

open and secret Word: the teachings of the Great Tsongkapa, the Buddha himself returned to us.

` , DAD GTONG RAB YANGS SBYIN PA'I BDAG MO CHE, ,G-YANG 'DZOMS
TSE RING GIS BSKRUN RNAM DKAR MTHUS, ,SA LAM BGROD PA RAB
MYUR SHING RTA'I SHUGS, ,ZUNG 'JUG GDOD MA'I RGYAL SAR MYUR
'GOD

She is a sponsor of the Dharma
Whose gifts of faith spread far and wide,
And Yangdzom Tsering in the deed done here
Has given birth to a pure white force.
May this power send her across the spiritual
Levels and paths, with the speed of a carriage,
And bring her quickly to the capital city
Of secret Union, before and beyond all time.

SHOG,, DGE LEGS 'PHEL, , , ,

Let goodness grow forever!

Notes to Reading Ten

[60 *Go forth now and defeat them*: These lines are found in the Great Fifth's famous presentation on the Steps of the path, entitled "Word of the Gentle One." They occur as a poetic interlude between sections of the work's prose philosophical presentation, a device favored as well by His Holiness the First Dalai Lama. "Mental afflictions" are essentially bad thoughts, and constitute a basic source of all our suffering. Their primary characteristic is to disturb our peace of mind, and linguistically as well their name in Sanskrit, *klesha*, comes from a verbal root meaning "to distress." Although the mental afflictions are nearly countless, the six primary ones are desire, anger, pride, ignorance, harmful doubt, and wrong views. See Prof. Whitney's *Roots of the Sanskrit Language*, and Kedrup Tenpa Dargye's "Overview of the Perfection of Wisdom."

61 *Six forms of life*: That is, the six different possible types of rebirth: as a hellbeing, a craving spirit, an animal, a human, someone nearly a pleasure being, or a full pleasure being. See also note 37.

62 *Three different kinds of suffering*: The illustrious Kedrup Tenpa Dargye explains them as follows in his *Overview of the Perfection of Wisdom*:

What we call "pervasive" suffering is the subtle condition of change, the fact that the physical, mental, and other parts of ourselves which we have taken on cannot remain, but begin to change from the moment after they come into existence. The suffering of change is typified by the pleasant sensation of the taste of a fine meal. The suffering of suffering, outright suffering, would be something like the painful sensation of a backache.

There is, by the way, a good reason for calling the first of these "pervasive" suffering: this is a kind of pain which pervades each and every thing produced by karma and mental afflictions, and pervades too all three realms of cyclic existence. Moreover, this particular suffering pervades each of the other two kinds.

63 *Stop desire for this life*: Also found in the Master's *Three Principal Paths*.

64 *Lineage of the Word*: The new and older schools of the Keepers of the Word, the Kadampas, are explained at note 29. "Lineage of the Word" is a translation of the word *Kagyü*, the name of one of the four great traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.

65 *You can't be sure you will live*: The Victor Yang Gonpa (1213-1258) was a famed early writer and practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism, and is known for a group of works called the "Hermit Cycle." He is one of the founding fathers of the "Drukpa" or "Dragon" lineage of the tradition of the Kagyu: the "Lineage of the Word." For a full account of his life, see Prof. George N. Roerich's translation of the *Blue Annals*, a history of Buddhism by Shunnu Pel, the Master Translator of Gu.

66 *Urges himself to perfect his practice*: A catalog from the Kokonor region of Tibet contains two references to a book entitled *The Tree of Faith Aplenty: Urging Myself to Perfect My Practice*, and states that it was composed by Drom Gyalway Jungne, otherwise known as Dromton Je—Lord Atisha's foremost disciple.

67 *Such a house of horrors*: The lines are found in a beautiful short piece entitled *A Song of Deep Despair*, from a collection of mental trainings by this seventh of the Dalai Lamas. The quotation is also found in Pabongka Rinpoche's *Gift of Liberation*.

68 *Nirvana beyond both extremes*: Refers to the nirvana attained by a fully enlightened Buddha, who eliminates every form of spiritual obstacle, and is thus free of both the extreme of living in the cycle of suffering life, and the extreme of staying in a lower, personal nirvana. See the great Kedrup Tenpa Dargye's *Analysis of the Perfection of Wisdom*.

69 *They sing the praises of morality*: The circumstances of the composition of these lines in praise of morality were especially joyful. Je Tsongkapa had sent one of his favorite disciples, Tsako Ngawang Drakpa, to eastern Tibet in order to teach and establish new monasteries. Upon the ordination of the first monks in the area of Gyalmo Rong, the disciple wrote a letter to the Master informing him of the event. These words are from an exquisite epistle which Je Tsongkapa sent in reply.

70 *The various vows of freedom*: Refers to the eight sets of vows found in the Buddhist scriptures; three are for laymen, and five for the ordained. Generally speaking they are called "vows of freedom" because, by observing them carefully, one can reach the freedom of nirvana. Perhaps the clearest and most concise presentation of the eight is found in Je Tsongkapa's own *Essence of the Ocean of Discipline*.

71 *Comes to rip out the life*: Lobsang Chukyi Gyaltzen (1567?-1662) was the first of the great Panchen Lamas and a renowned philosopher, historian, and statesman—as well as teacher of the great Fifth Dalai Lama. The lines are found in a short piece entitled *Divine Nectar for Exposing the Harmful Things I Have Done in the Past, and for Restoring Myself to Spiritual Health, by Relying on the Antidotes to Bad Deeds, from the Present Moment On*.

72 *Fill the reaches of space itself*: This quotation can be found in Pabongka Rinpoche's commentary to the *Three Principal Paths*, and in numerous other works on the Steps to the path.

73 *Flourishes even more*: The lines are found in Master Shantideva's classic manual for bodhisattvas.

74 *Those great beings who meditate*: The verses are from the *Lamp on the Path*, Lord Atisha's famed prototype for Tibetan texts on the Steps to Buddhahood. They are also quoted in the early *Steps of the Teaching* by Geshe Drolungpa.

75 *The Wish for enlightenment is the central beam*: The verse appears in Je Tsongkapa's *Songs of My Spiritual Life*.

76 *Train your mind in the proper progression*: The texts on the Steps to Buddhahood state that the great Wish for enlightenment can equally be developed by using either of the methods mentioned. The "seven-part, cause-and-effect instruction" comes down to us from Lord Buddha through masters such as Chandrakirti, Chandragomi, and Shantarakshita. It involves a preliminary step, developing neutrality towards all other beings, and then seven parts, the last being a result of the first six. The seven are:

- (1) Recognize that all beings have, in past lives, been your own mother.
- (2) Contemplate the kindness they showed you.
- (3) Develop a desire to repay them.
- (4) Find a kind of love where every other living being looks as lovely to you as a mother's only son.
- (5) Feel a strong compassion for them, a wish that they could escape every kind of pain.
- (6) Resolve to help them escape, through your own personal effort, by any means necessary.
- (7) This then brings you to the Wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of every living being.

The practice of "exchanging self and others" comes down to us from the Buddha through Master Shantideva, and means to replace one's concern for his own welfare with a concern for the welfare of others. Both methods combine in the teachings of Lord Atisha, Je Tsongkapa, and the Lamas of their lineage. See Pabongka Rinpoche's *Gift of Liberation*.

77 *All six perfections*: The six Buddhist perfections are giving, morality, controlling anger, enjoying good deeds, meditative concentration, and wisdom. One important source for the six is Master Chandrakirti's *Entering the Middle Way*, with chapters devoted to each.

78 *Avoiding the ten bad deeds*: See note 59 for the ten.

79 *Three sets of vows*: The freedom vows have been discussed above; see note 70. The bodhisattva vows consist of 18 root vows and 46 secondary vows by which one commits him or herself to the service of other beings. The secret vows are undertaken for the purpose of attaining enlightenment in this life, in order to benefit all sentient kind. See Pabongka Rinpoche's *Gift of Liberation*.

80 *Amassing merit and wisdom*: These two huge collections of good deeds and knowledge within one's mind stream act as the causes for the physical form and the omniscient state of a Buddha, respectively. See Pabongka Rinpoche's commentary to Je Tsongkapa's *Three Principal Paths*.

81 *Five problems to meditation*: The texts on the Steps to Buddhahood describe in detail the concept of five problems which occur as a person attempts to develop the perfect concentration known as meditative quietude. These five are countered by eight corrective measures, and lead the meditator through nine different states, with four modes. *Separating the Middle and the Extremes* is one of the works granted to Master Asanga in the 4th century by Maitreya, the future Buddha. It outlines these components of meditation in a very brief way and is used as the basis for later presentations.

The first of the five problems is called "laziness," a lack of motivation even to sit down and start trying to develop perfect concentration. It is countered by the first four of the corrective measures. Here one begins by developing (1) "faith," which means a clear understanding of the benefits of concentration. Once they are aware of these benefits, the meditator begins to (2) "aspire" to achieve them, which provides the impetus for (3) great "effort." The result of these three is (4) a kind of physical and mental "pliancy" which allows one to meditate easily. Practicing then becomes enjoyable, which is a natural antidote for the initial hesitation to begin meditating.

The second of the problems likely to arise in meditation is "forgetting the instruction," which here refers to losing the object which one has chosen to meditate upon. The correction for this is "remembering," which means trying to keep the mind on the object tightly, as you would hold a rope to keep it from slipping.

Only now, once the object is within one's mental grasp, can the third problem occur: dullness and agitation. Dullness is a heaviness of body and mind; in its gross form, one succeeds in fixing the mind but has no clarity—none of the bright, focussed feeling one gets for example while concentrating on a good

book. With the subtle form of dullness one enjoys both fixation and clarity, but the clarity lacks intensity. This leads to perhaps the most common error in meditation, marked by long periods of dimly focussed dullness, a fuzzy good feeling easily mistaken for real concentration.

Agitation, the second part of the third problem, occurs when the mind is distracted to an attractive object. The correction for both sides of the problem is known as "mindfulness," which simply means watching your own mind to catch yourself turning dull or agitated.

Although mindfulness may detect a problem occurring during meditation, one may fail to act upon the alarm, and this is the fourth problem. It is overcome by taking action, by tightening down on the meditation object in the case of subtle dullness, and by lightening up when this goes too far and causes a reaction of agitation. The idea is to maintain the proper tension, like tuning a guitar string: not too loose, and not too tight. The correction swings to either side of the problem, whichever necessary, as the driver of a car constantly corrects to left and right in order to keep a straight line.

At some point a straight line is achieved, and the concentration is running fine on its own. Now the fifth problem can occur: the fault of correcting when there is nothing to correct. This problem's natural antidote—the eighth—is to leave things alone.

The meditator passes through nine different states during the above process:

- 1) Fixing the mind: Moments of fixation on the object, with no continuity.
Time off the object is more than time on the object.
- 2) Fixing the mind continuously: Some ability to keep the mind on the object for a continuous period.

During these two states the mind is in the first of the four modes: engaging only with a conscious effort to focus.

- 3) Fixing the mind with patches: Mind kept on the object for longer periods, with brief gaps which are quickly patched.
- 4) Fixing the mind closely: No longer possible to lose the object, but dullness and agitation still very strong.

5) Controlling the mind: Gross dullness and agitation are overcome. Special problems with subtle dullness due to excessive effort to focus the mind inward.

6) Stilling the mind: Special problems with subtle agitation due to steps taken to stop subtle dullness.

7) Stilling the mind completely: With few exceptions, all dullness and agitation stopped. Infrequent occurrences of the two are countered by application of effort.

During these last five states the mind is in the second of the four modes: engaging but with interruptions, caused by dullness and agitation.

8) Focussing the mind single-pointedly: Slight initial effort is enough to prevent dullness and agitation for the entire remaining length of a meditation session.

During this eighth state the mind is in the third of the four modes: engaging without interruptions.

9) Balancing the mind: No effort at all required to start and remain in deep, single-pointed meditation.

During the ninth state the mind is in the last of the four modes: engaging effortlessly. This last state is also known as "approximate quietude"; it becomes true meditative quietude when one achieves true physical and mental pliancy.

The preceding discussion is based on Pabongka Rinpoche's *Gift of Liberation*, with additional material from Je Tsongkapa's *Greater Steps*.

82 *The fact that nothing has any nature of its own*: This refers to the Buddhist concept of emptiness, or voidness, and is easily misunderstood. For a full discussion, see Pabongka Rinpoche's own explanation in Je Tsongkapa's *Principal Teachings of Buddhism*.

83 *The three principal paths*: These three constitute an essential background, without which the study of the *Mountain of Blessings* would be incomplete. They are presented fully in Pabongka Rinpoche's elucidation of Je Tsongkapa's work entitled the *Three Principal Paths*.

84 *Listeners, self made Buddhas, and bodhisattvas*: See note 15.

90 *The goal is reached*: Je Tsongkapa again these lines on p. 471 of his *Golden Harvest*—the following words are included in the original: By force of meditation and the like, A person achieves the goal in this same life.

91 *Birth or death or the state between*: The lines by His Holiness the Seventh Dalai Lama are found in a letter of advice to one Rabjampa Gendun Drakpa.

92 *The "heaps," the "categories," and the "doors of sense"*: These are three ways of dividing the parts to ourselves and our world; the classic presentation of them is found throughout the first chapter of Master Vasubandhu's *Treasure House of Knowledge*.

The five "heaps" consist of our physical form, our feelings, our ability to discriminate, parts of us not covered in the other four heaps, and our consciousness. They are called "heaps" because each one consists of a large group of different things.

The eighteen "categories" are our five physical senses and our mental sense, along with the corresponding six objects and six consciousnesses. (For example, the physical sense of the eye, visual objects, and consciousness of what we see.) They are called "categories" in the sense of "types."

The twelve "doors of sense" are the six senses and their six objects. They are "doors of sense" in that they provide a cause or doorway through which the six types of consciousness arise. These three different presentations of the divisions to us and our world are made to fit varying types of students.

93 *Three bodies of a victorious Buddha*: The three bodies or parts of a Buddha are known as the Dharma Body, the Body of Enjoyment, and the Body of Emanation. The Dharma Body consists of the Buddha's omniscience, his state of having ended all impure qualities, and his or her emptiness. The Body of Enjoyment is the physical body of the Buddha in his paradise, and the Body of Emanation is the form which he projects to this and other planets to help living beings.

94 *But remember many are robbed*: The lines are found in His famed work on the Steps to Buddhahood entitled *Word of the Gentle One*.

95 *How the two levels of reality work*: The five great books have been described above at note 24. The "two levels of reality" refer to what are usually called "deceptive truth" and "ultimate truth." Both are valid, and all objects have both.

The dependence of objects (especially in the sense of depending upon the names and concepts we apply to them) is their conventional or deceptive truth. Their appearance is "deceptive" because to the minds of normal people they appear to be something other than what they actually are. The "ultimate" truth of objects is their lack of non-dependence, and is first seen directly in the all-important meditative state known as the "path of seeing." Seeing this truth directly acts immediately to stop the process through which we suffer.

96 Ten levels and five paths: The ten levels here refer to ten stages at which a bodhisattva attains an exceptional ability to perform the various perfections; they begin with the first direct perception of emptiness.

The five paths represent progressive stages towards the goal of nirvana and omniscience. The first, called the "path of accumulation," begins when a practitioner develops true renunciation for the suffering of life. For a person of the greater way this is accompanied by a full-fledged version of the Wish to gain enlightenment for the sake of others. The second path is called the "path of preparation," and is marked by increasingly refined intellectual understandings of emptiness.

The third path is the "path of seeing," named after the all-important initial direct perception of emptiness. During the subsequent stages of this path one also perceives directly what are called the Four Noble Truths of suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering, and the way to the end of suffering.

The fourth path is the "path of habituation," where one familiarizes himself repeatedly with the realizations of the previous path, in order to permanently remove all mental afflictions and their propensities. This state itself is known as the "path of no more learning," the fifth path. For a practitioner of the lower way this is nirvana, and for one of the greater way it represents the full enlightenment of a Buddha.

The subject of the ten levels and five paths is treated in detail in a standard type of textbook known as the "Presentation of the Levels and Paths."

97 Added here in conclusion: In general the verse is attached to many prayers and rituals as a fitting conclusion. As for dating its first appearance, the verse is not found in the *Mountain* commentary of Tsechokling Yeshe Gyeltsen (1713- 1793), nor in that of Akya Yangchen Gaway Lodru (c. 1760). It does though appear in

the explanations of the Second Jamyang Shepa, Konchok Jikme Wangpo (1728 1791), and Keutsang Lobsang Jamyang Monlam (b. 1689).

98 *By this virtue may all beings...* These are actually the final lines of Master Nagarjuna's *Sixty Verses of Reasoning*, and are often used nowadays as a prayer of dedication after the good deed of listening to a teaching. The entire verse reads:

By this virtue may all beings
Gather the masses of merit and wisdom.
May they achieve the ultimate two [bodies of a Buddha]
That the merit and the wisdom produce.

99 *The prayers of bodhisattva princes:* The original lines are from the third part of a verse description of his spiritual life by Je Tsongkapa entitled *Noble Hopes*. This section is called the "Dedication of All that I Had Done, that the Word should Flourish in the World," and the entire verse reads as follows:

The prayers of bodhisattva princes,
As many as the drops of water in the Ganges,
Are all—it is spoken—included within
A prayer that the Dharma be preserved.

Thus I take the core of virtue
Created by the good I have done
And dedicate it to the spread
Of the Buddha's teaching in the world.

I think of all I've done,
My hopes in life were noble;
Oh you have been kind to me,
Holy Treasure House of knowledge.

The *Treasure House* here, by the way, refers to Gentle Voice—Je Tsongkapa's tutor.

100 *The teacher unsurpassed:* The lines are often appended to prayers and recitation texts; see for example the version of Je Tsongkapa's *Songs of My Spiritual Life*. The entire verse reads:

The fact that in my life I've been able

To meet with the matchless Word of the Teacher
Is my Lama's kindness, so this good I've done
I dedicate to the cause that every
Living being might find himself
Under a holy Lama's care.

101 *The hermitage of the Victor*: The "Victor" here is Dromton Je, founder of Radreng Monastery—which is located to the north of Lhasa city. See note 16 for details.

102 *The Thousand Angels*: The *Thousand Angels of the Heaven of Bliss* is an extremely important devotional work and meditation centered on Je Tsongkapa. The preliminary practices are a method to prepare oneself properly for a meditation session; a typical version would be that of Pabongka Rinpoche's root Lama, Jampel Hlundrup.

103 *Milarepa and Kyungpo*: The great Milarepa (1040-1123) is perhaps the most famed meditator and writer of spiritual poetry in Tibet. In his early years he practiced black magic and used it to harm a great many people. Later he regretted this wrong path and became one of the greatest Buddhist masters of his time, spending a full nine years in intense meditation to achieve the ultimate goal. The sage Kedrup Kyungpo Neljor (b. 978) was originally a practitioner of the shamanistic Bon religion prevalent in Tibet prior to the arrival of Buddhism. Not reaching the goals he sought, Kedrup Kyungpo travelled to Nepal and India, mastering the Buddhist teachings. He founded numerous monasteries in Tibet and started the Shangpa school of the tradition known as the Kagyu: the Lineage of the Word. For thumbnail biographies see the *Great Dictionary*.

104 *Actually make them enlightened*: Original source of quotation not found. Tuken Chukyi Nyima (1737-1802) was the third incarnation of the Tuken lineage. His studies were influenced by such eminent Lamas as the Seventh Dalai Lama, the Third Panchen Lama, the great historian and grammarian Sumpa Kenpo Yeshe Peljor, the philosopher Changkya Rolpay Dorje, and most importantly Purbuchok Ngawang Jampa, known for his writings on history and the secret teachings. Perhaps the most famous of Tuken's lucid treatises is his *Survey of the Schools of Philosophy*.

105 *Those with the goodness to hear it*: Original source of quotation not found. Changkya Rolpay Dorje (1717-1786) was the second incarnation of the Line of the Changkya Lamas, and is said in fact to have been a former life of Pabongka

Rinpoche himself. He was Lama to the Emperor of China and instrumental in the publication of the entire Buddhist canon in Mongolian.

106 *Just what our Lord Lama has taught:* The lines are found in a short piece which describes how to meditate on the impermanence of life. Gungtang Tenpay Dronme (1762-1823) spent his early years at the monastery of Labrang Tashi Kyil in east Tibet, and then studied under leading masters of his day at the great Drepung Monastery in Lhasa. He displayed extraordinary talent and received the highest scholastic degree at the age of twenty-two. His collected works span a wide range of subjects including the open and secret teachings of Buddhism, the fine arts, medicine and astrology, and classical grammar.

107 *One of the Sugarcane:* An epithet of the historical Buddha, who was born into a group of people called "Those of the Sugarcane."

108 *The royal Regent, the Invincible Savior, and Gentle Voice:* The Regent and Savior mentioned here refer to Loving One, Maitreya, the future Buddha who has been put as regent of the Heaven of Bliss by the present Buddha, Shakyamuni. The lineage of far-reaching deeds motivated by the Wish for enlightenment has come down from Lord Buddha through him, and the lineage of the profound view of emptiness has been passed down to us through Gentle Voice, Manjushri.

109 *Descended in a perfect stream:* The lines here are describing exactly the same lineages to which Je Tsongkapa made his original supplication when he wrote the text of the *Mountain of Blessings*. The third-century Indian masters Nagarjuna and Aryadeva are sometimes referred to as the "Father and Son," teacher and disciple for the philosophy of emptiness. Master Asanga is also known as the "Brother" since he and the illustrious Vasubandhu had the same mother. Both Nagarjuna and Asanga are spoken of us as "innovators" in the sense that they were able to elucidate the scriptures without relying on a previous innovator, and were prophesied as such by the Buddha himself. This subject is treated at length in monastic presentations on the perfection of wisdom such as the *Analysis* of Kedrup Tenpa Dargye.

110 *The kindness of one great God:* The "God" here refers to Atisha, who with his principal disciple Dromton Je was chiefly responsible for introducing the teachings on the Steps into Tibet. See also note 19.

111 *Sixty most glorious tones:* Refers to sixty different remarkable traits of the speech of the Buddha. The most important of these, as Pabongka Rinpoche

himself notes in his *Gift of Liberation*, is the spontaneous ability to speak in a single language, Sanskrit, which is heard by each disciple as his own native tongue.

112 *The mother of the moon*: The image has a multitude of meanings but, most importantly here, refers to the great outer ocean of Buddhist cosmology. The floor of the ocean was believed in Tibet to be the source of precious jewels.

113 *Way of the Heaven of Bliss*: Refers to the teaching tradition of Je Tsongkapa. The "serpents" mentioned here are the mythical "nagas;" their home was in bodies of water, and it was believed that, so long as they remained in them, the water would never dry up. Here the mighty Lamas of the Lineage are the serpents; because of them, the ocean of the teachings like the present book remain.

114 *The retreat house known as Tashi Chuling*: A hermitage favored by Pabongka Rinpoche and located above an outcropping near Lhasa named "Pabongka Rock." This was the location of Pabongka Monastery, and as a child the Rinpoche was recognized as the reincarnation of this monastery's abbot.

115 *Son of Sholkang*: Sholkang was a powerful government official who assisted the regent of Tibet from the year 1907, and passed away in 1926.

116 *Lobsang, the King of Buddhas*: Meaning Je Tsongkapa, Lobsang Drakpa.

117 *The Meeting of the Angels*: A biweekly celebration of the Angel of Diamond. The monastery of Den is located in Kham, east Tibet. The Hlalu were a well-known aristocratic of old Tibet; their principal holdings were located to the northwest of Lhasa, on the road to Drepung Monastery.]