

ATISHA  
AND  
BUDDHISM IN TIBET



TIBET HOUSE  
1, Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi



**ATISHA  
AND  
BUDDHISM IN TIBET**

Compiled and translated by  
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1, Institutional Area  
Lodhi Road, New Delhi**

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THE DALAI LAMA



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## FOREWORD

I am happy to know that *TIBET HOUSE* will be publishing a booklet entitled: *ATISHA AND BUDDHISM IN TIBET*, containing three works by Atisha Dipankara in connection with the celebration of his Millennium Birth Anniversary.

Atisha Dipankara was a great Indian Buddhist Saint scholar who immensely cherished the principles of altruism and compassion and had rendered invaluable service towards the promotion of Buddhism and is even today held in high reverence by Buddhists all over the world. Tibetans are particularly grateful to Atisha Dipankara, as it was he who toiled to revive Buddhism in Tibet, following the systematic destruction it suffered in the 9th century during the reign of 41st Tibetan King Lang Darma.

I hope that the publication of some of the works by Atisha Dipankara will further enhance Buddhists' reverence and gratitude to the great Indian Saint.

June 23, 1983





## INTRODUCTION

Tibet House, founded in 1956 by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and inaugurated by the then Minister of Education of the Government of India, Shri M.C. Chagla, is the Cultural Centre in New Delhi dealing with the learning, art, religion and literature of Tibet. This Institution conducts a number of programmes, amongst which publication ranks with importance. This booklet on the life and teachings of the eleventh century Indian Buddhist master Atisha is one of our efforts in this direction. It is brought out in conjunction with the anniversary of Atisha's birth in Bengal one thousand years ago.

The master Atisha, who came to Tibet in 1042 CE and remained there until his death, provided Buddhism in Central Asia with a new thrust of spiritual vigour, inspiring millions of Buddhists over the generations that followed. Indeed, his lineages have come down to us today and still act as a major force in most schools of Central Asian Buddhism. Many of his texts are used even today as the basis of public sermons and discourses by eminent Lamas, especially his *Lam-Don*, or *Light on the Stages in Spiritual Practice* (Skt. *Bodhi-patha-pradipam*).

Atisha was important to Tibetan Buddhism in many ways, one of the most fundamental being his presentation of all aspects of Buddha's teachings—Hinayana, general Mahayana and Vajrayana—as complimentary,

non-contradictory factors in training. He taught not only the various forms of Buddhism existent in North India at the time; in addition he widely disseminated several Indonesian lineages, which he had gained through twelve years of study in Indonesia at the feet of Suvarnadivipi Dharmakirti. In fact, he often referred to this master as his most kind teacher. These Indonesian lineages were particularly cherished by the Tibetans and still exist today. It is an auspicious omen that the recent completion by UNESCO of the restoration of the Borobodur Monument in Indonesia coincides with the 1000th anniversary of Atisha's birth.

This volume contains four translations. The first of these is the brief account of Atisha's life as given by Lama Tsong Khapa (1357-1419) in his *Lam-rim-chen-mo*. The final three are from the *Tenjur* collection known as *A Hundred Minor Texts* (Tib. *Jo-woi Chos-chung-brgya-rtsa*). It is interesting to note that the last of these three (i.e. Chapter IV) was written at the request of an Indonesian King Guru-phala by name. The text in Chapter III is also written to a king, whose name is given in the text as Nirya-phala, though most scholars consider him to be King Nayapala of Magadha, India. This remains to be researched.

I would like to thank my friend Mr Glenn H. Mullin for his efforts in the translation and preparation of the manuscript for this work; and also my colleagues in Tibet House for their cooperation and assistance.

New Delhi  
July 14th, 1983.

Doboom Tulku,  
Director  
Tibet House

CHAPTER I

**THE LIFE OF JOWO ATISHA**

(From the introductory section of Lama Tsong Khapa's  
*Lam-Rim-Chen-mo or Great Treatise (on Atisha's Light  
on the) Stages in Spiritual Practice*<sup>1</sup>.)

This account of the life of the great master Dipamkara Shrijnana, also famed as Jowo Je Atisha, will be presented under three outlines: how he took birth in an especially great family; how on the basis of that rebirth, he attained to excellence; and, having gained excellence, how he worked for the Doctrine.

## 1. HIS BIRTH

To quote *The Eighty Verses in Praise of Atisha* (*bsTod-pa-rgya-bcu-pa*) by (Atisha's disciple and translator) Nag-tso Lotsawa,

In the east of India, in Zahor<sup>2</sup>,  
Is a wondrous and mighty city  
Known by the name of Vikrama-pura  
At the centre of this royal city  
Is a splendid, majestic palace  
Known as the Palace of the Golden Banner.

As for the wealth and prosperity of this city,  
It is said to equal that of the Chinese Emperor  
Tong-Khun.

The King of this city was known as Kalyana-shri  
And his queen as Prabha-vati.

This couple had three sons:

Padma-garbha, Chandra-garbha and  
Shri-garbha.

Padma-garbha had five wives and nine sons.

The eldest son, known as Shri-punya,

Was to become the master

We now know by the name of Dana-shri.<sup>3</sup>

The youngest prince, Shri-garbha,

Became the monk Vidya-chandra.

It is the second prince, Chandra-garbha

Who became the illustrious master Atisha.

## 2. HOW HE GAINED EXCELLENCE

This involves two subjects: how he gained the excellence of scriptural knowledge; and how he gained the excellence of insight.

As for the first of these, *The Eighty Verses* states,

By the age of twenty-one the prince  
Had mastered the sixty-four forms of sport,  
As well as the arts, crafts,  
Grammar, literature and philosophy.

As said here, by the age of twenty-one, Prince Chandra-garbha had gained mastery in the four basic studies common to both Buddhists and Hindus:

literature, philosophy, the arts and medicine.

In particular, at the age of fifteen he, publicly debated with a renowned Hindu scholar and won. The subject was the *Nyāya-bindu*, upon which he himself had received only one discourse. From this time on, the banner of his name spread into all directions.

Thereafter he went to The Temple of Black Mountain. Here dwelt the lord of yogis Rahula-gupta, who had gained inner vision through the *Hevajra Tantra*, and had received a direct prophecy from Vajra Yogini. From Rahula-gupta he received initiation into the tantric path and was given the secret name of Jnana-guhya-vajra. From this time until the age of twenty-nine he studied under many masters who had gained siddhi, devoting himself intensely to the practice of the secret Vajra-yana. In this way he became adept in all the scriptures and transmissions. In fact he became so learned that at one point the thought arose in his mind, "I am the most learned tantrica." However, soon after this a mystic dakini appeared to him in a dream and showed him many tantric scriptures that he had never even heard of before, thus eliminating his pride.

After this, both directly and in dreams he was admonished by many Gurus and divinities to work for the benefit of the Doctrine and the sentient beings, and was advised that he could best do this by taking monastic ordination.

*The Eighty Verses* states,

It is well known that your ordination master  
Had attained the path of application.

As said here, he then received monastic ordination from the great vinaya holder Shila-rakshita of the

Mahasamgika lineage, who is said to have attained the samadhi which abides in emptiness as experienced on the path of application. It was here that he received the name Dipamkara Shri-jnana.

From this time until the age of thirty-one he studied the Sutras and their commentaries in accordance with both lower and higher schools. Especially at Odantapuri he studied the three baskets of scriptures, and especially the *Maha-vaibasha*, under the Guru Dhama-rakshita. In all he here dedicated twelve years to the formal study of the scriptures, becoming very learned in the four root (Vaibashaka) schools and mastering even the most subtle points in the practices of the various traditions.<sup>4</sup> Thus he crossed the ocean of philosophies and gaining an undistorted understanding of the meaning of the scriptures of all schools of Buddhist thought. In this way he gained an unmistakable understanding of all points of the Doctrine and achieved excellence in scriptural knowledge.

In general the excellence of scriptural knowledge means understanding the three divisions of the scriptures, the collection of all Buddhist doctrines; and the excellence of insight refers to the accomplishment of the three higher trainings: discipline, samadhi and wisdom. As for these three, it is said in many scriptures that all progress in the trainings of samadhi and wisdom, etc., require stability in discipline as their basis. Therefore one must first cultivate strength in discipline if one wishes to progress in the other trainings.

The training in discipline has three aspects: the (Hinayana) *pratimoksha* disciplines; the (general Mahayana) Bodhisattva disciplines; and lastly, the exclusive Vajrayana disciplines.<sup>5</sup>

Concerning (Atisha's) accomplishment of the first of these,

From the time you took upon yourself  
The disciplines of the Sravaka Vehicle,  
You guarded the precepts as  
A yak guards its tail.  
Homage to the *sthavira* and  
vinaya-holder Atisha,  
A supreme monk upholding the  
*brahma-charya* path.

A yak who gets his tail caught in a bush will sacrifice his life to a hunter rather than cause a single hair of the tail to be broken off. What to say of how much more strongly one should treasure one's trainings? The great Atisha maintained each aspect of his disciplines more intensely than the mighty yak guards its tail, thus becoming an accomplished *stravira* and vinaya-holder.

His accomplishment in the Bodhisattva disciplines is stated as follows in *The Eighty Verses*,

From the time you entered into the  
Paramita Vehicle  
You dwelled within the exceptional  
Bodhisattva attitude  
And, motivated by the sublime bodhimind,  
Never abandoned love for all sentient beings.  
Homage to Atisha, who so strongly  
Possessed love and compassion.

Thus he received many oral transmissions on how to cultivate the Bodhisattva attitude, the bodhimind, which takes love and compassion as its basis. Especially,



under the illustrious Indonesian master Ser-ling-pa he trained in the Bodhisattva methods of the lineages of Asanga and Shantideva as passed down from Maitreya and Manjushri. *The Eighty Verses* states,

Having transcended self interest,  
You generated the Bodhisattva outlook  
That cares for the needs of others.  
Such were the ways of my Guru (Atisha).

As said here, Atisha first gave birth to the bodhimind, which cherishes others more than oneself, and then engaged in the mighty Bodhisattva ways of the actual bodhimind, which gets its direction from the aspirational bodhimind. Throughout his practice he never contradicted the Bodhisattva code of conduct.

Thirdly, how he accomplished the Vajrayana disciplines is explained as follows in *The Eighty Verses*,

Having entered into the secret Vajrayana,  
You always maintained awareness  
Of yourself as a tantric divinity  
And possessed the supreme vajra mind.  
Homage to he who guarded the  
Precepts of the secret Path  
And accomplished the tantric yogas  
Under the accomplished adept Avadhuti-pada.

In this way the master Atisha cultivated the samadhi of envisioning himself as a tantric divinity in accordance with the generation stage trainings and brought to fulfillment the vajra-mind. In this way he became an accomplished tantric adept.

In particular, he maintained the tantric commit-

ments without transgression, as is said in *The Eighty Verses*,

By possessing mindfulness and alertness  
You never acted as would result  
In transgression of the tantric code.  
With vigilance and recollection  
And by avoiding deceit and pretence  
You avoided becoming stained by failings.

Atisha was not merely eager in taking upon himself the commitments of the Hinayana, general Mahayana and Vajrayana; he was equally eager in following these through by avoiding all transgressions and failings. Even should he occasionally happen to contradict a minor aspect of training he would immediately purify the breach and restore the practice by means of the appropriate ceremonies and meditations. Thus we can see that he lived a life delightful for the wise to behold, training himself as have the great sages of the past.

Secondly, how he accomplished the training in samadhi involves two subjects: the general (i.e. Sutrayana) trainings and the exclusively tantric trainings.

The first of these refers to the control and power of mind achieved by means of the accomplishment of samatha. The second refers to the disciplines of a knowledge holder. The master Atisha accomplished both of these, achieving the latter by means of a three years retreat, or, according to other sources, a six year retreat. At that time he was living in Oddiyana. It is said that here he heard the mystic songs of many Sakinis, which he instantly committed to memory.

The training in wisdom also has two phases: the

general (i.e. Sutrayana) and the exclusively tantric trainings. The first of these refers to the samadhi of *vipashyana* meditation joined inseparably with *shamatha*.<sup>6</sup> The latter refers to the unique samadhi achieved through the completion stage yogas of the tantric path. The master Atisha attained both of these realizations.

*The Eighty Verses* says,

According to the tantric scriptures  
You transcended the path of application.

### 3. HOW HE WORKED FOR THE DOCTRINE.

Atisha's work for the benefit of the Doctrine involves two subjects: his work in India and his work in Tibet.

His work in India began with his great debate at the temple of Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, where he defeated the Hindu philosophers three times and thus uplifted the Doctrine.<sup>7</sup> In brief, he dedicated himself intensely to elucidating confused, wrong and doubtful points in his own and other (Buddhist) schools, thus greatly elevating the state of the Buddha-dharma in India. Because he worked for all schools without partiality, he was honoured by all as supreme. *The Eighty Verses* states,

At the Temple of Enlightenment  
In the presence of a vast gathering  
You cleared away wrong views  
From within your own and other schools  
Of Buddhism your lions' roar  
Causing the brain of error to shatter.

And also,

In Odantapuri Monastery there were some  
250 monks  
And in Vikramashila almost a hundred  
Upholding the four root (Vaibashaka) schools  
Yet all equally respected you.  
In fact all four great monasteries  
Flourishing in Central India  
Took you as a crown jewel amongst teachers.  
All eighteen Vaibashaka schools placed  
You as a crown on their heads  
And came to study under you.

His work in Tibet was brought about at the instigation of King Yeshe Od and his nephew and successor King Jang-chub-od, who sent the translators Lotsawa Gya-tsun-drub Seng-ge and Nag-tso Lotsawa to India for the purpose of inviting the master to Tibet. These two emissaries made repeated requests, and eventually, during the reign of King Jang-chub-od, Atisha arrived at Upper Nga-ri.<sup>8</sup> Here he was requested to purify and uplift the state of the Dharma. In response he composed his masterpiece, known as *Light on the Stages in Spiritual Practice* (Skt. *Bodhi-patha-pradipam*), which extracts all the essential themes from both the Sutra and Vajra Vehicles, and arranges these in accordance with their appropriate stages in practice.

He remained in Nga-ri for three years and after that went to Nye-tang and taught there for a further six years. He then dedicated five more years to teaching in various other places in Central and Southern Tibet, guiding disciples of good fortune to a correct experience of the inner meaning of the Sutras and Tantras.

Wherever the Doctrine had disappeared he re-established it; where it had diminished he revived it; and where it had become stained by wrong interpretations he purified it. Thus he brought Dharma in Tibet into a state free from distortion.

Historically Buddhism in Tibet had suffered from two main problems. The first of these occurred during the earlier spread of Buddhism in Tibet. The pure thought of Buddha had been introduced by Shantarakshita and Guru Padma Sambhava, but the Chinese teacher Hwa-chang, misinterpreting the deeper aspects of the emptiness doctrine, had confused methodology and was advocating blank-minded meditation working on the principle of suppressing mental functions. Shantarakshita's own disciple Kamalashila had been invited from India to meet Hwa-chang in debate, and in fact had come and successfully defeated the latter. Thus he performed the enormous kindness of re-clarifying the original thought of Buddha and eliminating wrong interpretations.

The second problem occurred during the later spread of the Doctrine (i.e. its revival after Lang Darma's persecution.) Here several self-proclaimed masters and yogis who had misinterpreted the meaning of the Tantras were teaching in such a way that the very root of the Doctrine, the monastic practice of *brahma-charya*, was endangered. Atisha successfully countered their influence. In addition, he eliminated wrong understanding of the Tantras and spread the true doctrine. Thus his kindness pervaded the entire land of Tibet.

In order to write a text on the holy Dharma one should have three causes as one's basis: mastery of the five great branches of knowledge; be in possession of a living oral tradition of practice coming in an unbroken

lineage from Buddha, which is the practical essence of the five branches of knowledge; and one should have experience or inner vision of one's meditational divinity and have received mystical inspiration to compose a text. The master Atisha possessed all three.

His visionary experiences are given in *The Eighty Verses* as follows,

Having perceived in meditation  
The countenances of your tantric meditational  
deities  
Such as Hevajra, Tri-samaya-byuha-raja  
Avalokiteshvara, Tara and so forth,  
You were guided in your life's works.  
Directly and also in dreams  
You constantly listened to mystic teachings  
from them.

As for his holding a living oral tradition, he in fact possessed many lineages. The Doctrine can be spoken of in terms of Hinayana and Mahayana lineages, or Sutrayana and Vajrayana. If we follow this latter classification system, the Sutrayana lineages become twofold: the method and the wisdom transmissions. The latter of these came to Atisha in an unbroken line from Manjushri. As for the former, he received two separate lines of transmission: one coming from Maitreya and the other from Manjushri.

Concerning the Vajrayana lineages, there are five principal lines of transmission, as well as various other lineages of oral transmissions, traditions of tantric systemization, inspired traditions, and so forth. Here he held all major lineages as well as most important subsidiary transmissions.

The Gurus from whom he received his most prominent transmissions are listed in *The Eighty Verses* as follows:

The Gurus upon whom you most deeply relied  
Were Shanti-pada,  
The Indonesian master Suvarnadvipi  
Dharmakirti  
And Bhadra-bodhi-shri,  
All of whom had gained many siddhis.  
Especially you held the complete  
Wisdom lineage coming from Nagarjuna  
In a unbroken succession of Gurus,  
As well as the extensive method lineages.

Atisha studied under more than a dozen masters, as well as many Gurus of lesser importance to his spiritual career.

Thirdly, as for his mastery of the five branches of knowledge, this has been dealt with earlier in the section on his acquisition of excellence in scriptural knowledge.

Qualified in these ways, the master Atisha was able to penetrate to the very heart of Buddha's teachings.

An inconceivable number of disciples came to Atisha during his years of teaching in India, Kashmir, Oddiyana, Nepal and Tibet. His principal Indian disciple was the master Pitopa, who is said to have equalled Atisha himself. Other renowned Indian disciples were Dharma-akara-mati, Madhya-simha and Bhu-garbhā. These were his four closest students in India. Some biographies mention a fifth disciple of equal excellence, Mitra-gupta.

His greatest disciples in Nya-ri were the translators

Rin-chen Zang-po and Nag-tso Lotsawa, as well as King Guru-Deva Jang-chub-Od. In southern Tibet his most important disciples included Gar-ge-wa and Go-khug-pa-lha. In the Lho-drak area his disciples Chag-pa Tri-chog and Ge-wa Kyong were especially accomplished. To mention a few of the exceptional disciples who came to him from Kham, East Tibet: Nal-jor-chen-po, Gon-pa-pa, che-rab Dorje and Chag-dar-Ten-pa were supreme. In Central Tibet the more famous disciples were Khu-ton, Ngog, Lotsawa and Lama Drom Tonpa.

From amongst all his disciples, however, it is Lama Drom Tonpa<sup>9</sup> who came forth as the personage to act as the main recipient of Atisha's lineages and as the principal agent in the fulfilment of the master's works. Tara herself had prophesied this to Atisha years before the master and disciple had met.

Thus is complete my brief sketch of the life of the illustrious master Atisha. Those wishing to know more of his deeds should study the extensive version of his biography.



CHAPTER II

**A SUMMARY OF THE MEANS FOR  
ACCOMPLISHING THE MAHAYANA PATH**

**Skt. Mahayana-patha-sadhana-varna-samgraha**

**Tib. Theg-pa-chen-po-lam-gyi-sgrub-thabs-yi-ger-bsdus-pa**

Homage to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

1. You who wishes to gain highest enlightenment  
Possessed of inconceivable greatness,  
The practices bringing enlightenment are your own  
responsibility.  
Direct your energies at the essence of practice.
2. We have found rebirth as humans<sup>1</sup>  
Endowed with the glory of freedom, a most rare  
opportunity.  
It is not easy to regain this status after death;  
Make great efforts in spiritual practice and render  
life meaningful.
3. A Buddha has come, the Sangha thrives,  
We have achieved a rare human rebirth  
And have met with spiritual masters.  
Do not make it in vain.
4. Like a butter lamp in a windstorm,  
There is no security in this life.

Practice the teachings as intensely  
As though your body or head were on fire.

5. All the good things that exist  
In this world and beyond  
Arise from the powers of practice.  
The wise who make practice their principal activity  
Know happiness here and hereafter.  
What sage would doubt this?  
Thus it is appropriate for sensitive people  
To engage in the essence of practice.
6. The people weak in the ways of practice,  
Whose minds grasp at the objects of sensuality,  
Are very far from the glories  
Of this life and beyond.
7. Bound by delusion and tortured  
By the miseries of cyclic existence,  
The weakened beings of the world know every  
samsaric pain  
And experience no true happiness.
8. The wise therefore avoid  
Attachment to sensual objects.  
They make practice their main interest.<sup>2</sup>
9. In order to become free from attachment,  
Meditate on the faults of passion  
As related in the many scriptures.  
Keep the mind constantly clear.
10. The harmful effects of indulgence  
Are like those from having drunk poison.

Non-dharma, the cause of suffering,  
Spreads like a grass fire.

11. Desire brings no satisfaction,  
Just like a thirsty person is not satisfied  
By water mixed with salt.  
Buddha himself said this.
12. Desire is unnecessarily dangerous,  
like picking fruit from the top of a tree  
When it could be safely plucked from the lower  
branches  
Without even leaving the roadside.
13. Spiritually immature people, through  
Constant obsession with sensual objects,  
Destroy themselves. One should know  
That attachment brings every fault.
14. Attachment's function is to cause pain.  
From time immemorial we have wandered  
In cyclic existence due to attachment.
15. The surging river of attachment  
Carries us on the wheel of samsara.  
All faults are born from it.
16. Attachment harms us in all lifetimes  
It did so in past lives,  
Will do so in the future  
And even now is harming us.
17. Meditate constantly on that fact,  
Seeing oneself as a prisoner

In the dungeons of samsara,  
Thus disillusioning oneself concerning  
The nature of cyclic existence.

18. Thinking of the difficulties of prison life,  
A convict is disillusioned with crime;  
Be disillusioned with samsara.  
When a convict sees an opportunity  
To escape from his unhappy lot,  
He will seize it and flee,  
Unlike those content with their life.
19. Now we have the opportunity  
To cross over the great ocean of samsara;  
We should be unlike all others  
In embarking upon the path with vigour,  
Leaving behind the worldly life.
20. O sensitive thinkers with the wish  
To end cyclic misery for self and others,  
Avoid attachment as you would  
(Placing your hand in) fire.  
Is it not more wise to make  
Dharma practice your main concern?
21. Persons wishing to accomplish the path should  
Make knowledge of Dharma their basis.  
They first take refuge in the Three Jewels  
And then engage in the various trainings.  
Thereafter they maintain the six recollections.
22. A Buddhist practitioner should constantly meditate  
On the limitless qualities of Buddhahood.

This makes one's spiritual endeavour firm  
And strengthens personal conviction, the root of  
Dharma.

23. A dewdrop on a blade of grass will not remain  
for long.  
Therefore the wise never generate  
Evil deeds for the benefit of this one short life;  
For evil produces the miseries  
Of rebirth in the lower realms.
24. Maintain the ten disciplines purely  
And engage in the various levels of the  
*pratimoksha* trainings  
In accordance with your personal capacity.
25. The source of the wealth of sainthood  
Is spiritual learning and practice.  
This is the wealth to be sought.
26. Yet discipline is always the basis.  
When one's discipline degenerates,  
The value of one's learning is harmed  
And regret undoubtedly is the result.  
To avoid this, destroy arrogance  
And heed the spiritual teachers.
27. Those wishing to enter into Mahayana practice  
Should strive to generate the bodhimind,  
Even if an aeon of lifetimes is required;  
For the bodhimind is like the sun and moon  
In clearing darkness and soothing pain.  
Firstly generate the bodhimind,  
Then cultivate it, making it firm as Mt. Meru itself.

28. Those wishing to generate and practise  
the bodhimind  
Should meditate with persistence on the  
Four pure contemplations, such as love, etc.  
They should avoid attachment and envy  
And should implement the appropriate ordination  
ceremony.
29. The people who permit their vigilance to degenerate  
See all their Dharma practice degenerate.  
Practice vigilance as the innermost yoga.
30. Like parents care for an only child,  
Like a person with one eye guards that  
eye carefully,  
Like travellers look after their guide  
And like the fruit of a medicine tree,  
Guard the mind with vigilance.
31. Bodhimind is the very root of enlightenment.  
The magic circle of activities  
Of the courageous Bodhisattvas  
All arise from the bodhimind's strength.
32. If one does not possess the bodhimind,  
Then even if one practices the six perfections  
from generosity to wisdom,  
The practice will lack even the name of perfection,  
For its basis is not firm.
33. This would be like a Sravaka  
Or Pratyeka-buddha practising the six  
It does not generate the Mahayana mind  
That draws all goodness to itself.

34. One may gain countless samadhis  
And accomplish the meditative absorptions  
Of the four realms of form and formlessness,  
Yet this will not give one the strength  
With which to cross samsara's ocean.
35. Relying on the bodhimind as one's carriage,  
Constantly prod the horses  
With the iron whip of mindfulness of death.  
Quickly pass beyond the paths of worldly terrors  
And strive to accomplish fearless Buddhahood.
36. Abiding in thoughts of refuge,  
Higher discipline and spiritual aspiration,  
Take upon yourself the oath of a Bodhisattva  
And gradually work in accordance with your  
                    capacity  
Through all the Bodhisattva practices  
Such as the six perfections.
37. Read the Sutras dealing with the Bodhisattva ways  
And study the Shastras.  
Never be satiated with the teachings,  
Always seek more learning:<sup>3</sup>  
This is the source of all progress,  
Like the ocean collects all rivers  
And become a bed of treasures.
38. All the great scriptures praise the path  
Of relying well on a spiritual master.  
Like the oceans collect all the world's water,  
All good qualities are collected by relying on  
                    that path.



39. Become skilled in the Bodhisattva practices;  
Show firm conviction in the excellence  
Of the Bodhisattva's marvellous ways.
40. Engage vigilance, mindfulness and awareness  
To maintain clarity of mind and  
To turn back the influence of the delusions  
That flow so strongly in one's mindstream.
41. Constantly absorb the mind in contemplation  
Of the themes of the enlightenment teachings.  
The Buddha children who train in this way  
Never experience setbacks in practice.
42. All of one's activities of body, speech and mind  
Must be integrated into the Guru's teachings  
And the themes of the Mahayana scriptures,  
Make your innermost consultant the Dharma.
43. Avoid what contradicts the Dharma  
And accomplish what is in harmony with it.  
The intelligent who make Dharma practice their  
main activity  
Are the truly glorious ones, the real heroes.  
Without doubt they shall know joy  
In this life and hereafter.
44. Spend less time with people having  
No interest in spiritual knowledge,  
And leave behind worldly ways.  
Adopt a quiet life of solitude,  
Applying yourself to the various practices  
On the basis of serenity and discipline.  
Do not envy the worldly ways of life.

45. Never take note of faults in others;  
Rather, note your own faults.  
Also, the wise leave far behind the habit  
Of speaking harshly or cruelly to others.
46. The Buddha children who practise thus  
Will gain joy before time's end:  
This was said by Buddha himself.
47. Looking down upon, disparaging and belittling  
others  
Are forces that degenerate oneself.  
Practise the meditation that sees  
All beings as one's teacher.  
Maintain this attitude especially strongly  
Toward practitioners and Bodhisattvas.
48. For those holding monastic ordination,  
The big trap lies in receiving  
Material gifts and social respect.  
Avoid attachment to such things.  
Those free from materialistic grasping  
Are a source of delight to the wise,  
Like a lotus blossoming in fire.
49. Ordained practitioners have a special responsibility  
In preserving the holy Dharma.  
They should live in the four higher ways,  
such as moderation, etc.  
Should have few needs and  
Learn to be content with a simple life.  
Buddha also recommend for them the practice  
Of the twelve austere trainings.

50. One should live with few possessions  
And dwell with one's back turned  
To the things that cause grasping.  
Be as a wanderer in foreign lands,  
Taking food as it is found,  
Like the birds in migration.
51. The effort to cultivate one's mindstream  
Is praised as most wondrous in the Sutras.  
Hold the difficult-to-tame mind  
From wandering into distraction.
52. Otherwise, even if one studies day and night,  
It is all lost to worldly concerns, such as  
    personal esteem,  
And ends only as fuel for conflict.  
Direct all study and learning  
To the essence of Dharma realization.
53. Life is easily lost to meaninglessness  
And one's spiritual progress degenerates.  
Then when the lord of Death strikes  
One's mindstream will be pained with regret.
54. Have equanimity in worldly affairs,  
Which delude the spiritually immature.  
The time will soon come when even one's name  
Will not be remembered in anyone's mind.  
Even the smallest trace of the  
Ashes of one's bones will not remain.
55. What need be said then of the perishability  
Of material gain, social esteem and fame?  
The intelligent ask themselves this question:  
Where will my mind be at that time?

56. People on initial stages of practice  
Will find it difficult to have the mind of solitude  
Without relying upon physical solitude.  
Therefore they avoid gregariousness  
And take to a quiet forest dwelling.
57. Gregariousness breeds bad habits and attachments  
And turns the wheel of cyclic patterns.  
Hence one should avoid socializing  
And always observe the mind with vigilance.
58. Avoid indulgence in sleep;  
The purpose of a life of solitude  
Is to accomplish the Dharma practices.  
Strive in these with zealous energy,  
The force for completing all paths.
59. Meditate on the four mindfulnesses  
And transcend the four wrong views.  
Avoid delighting in meaningless talks  
And cultivate meaningful interests.
60. The bark of the sugarcane plant has no sap;  
The sweet cane juice that is so prized  
is inside the plant.  
The people who only chew on the bark  
Cannot know the sweetness of sugar essence.
61. The words of the Dharma are like the skin  
of the cane plant  
And contemplation of the meaning of the words  
Is like the essential juice of the plant.  
Abandon using too many words  
And maintain meaningful absorptions with  
vigilance.

62. Be aware that you are wearing the  
Bodhisattva armour  
For the benefit of all sentient beings,  
And do not discriminate between them such as by  
Showing preferential attitudes to some over others,  
Which degenerates the Bodhisattva trainings.
63. When one finds oneself about to speak  
Because the mind has been moved by  
desirous thoughts  
To receive respect, gain or esteem,  
Know that this is a malignant spirit  
Come to hinder one's spiritual practice,  
And that in nature this hindering spirit  
Is within one's own mindstream.
64. Try to have no special attachment  
Towards friends and relatives.  
Have few requirements,  
For dependence brings weakness  
And creates a hindrance to pure practice.
65. Avoid obsession with various works.  
Cultivating the difficult to tame mind,  
Train in the path of higher goodness,  
Avoid delighting in endless plans,  
And make clarity in patience your ornament.  
The power of patience is beyond description.
66. Observe the faults of the six worldly cravings,  
Such as seeking gain and respect,  
And practice with constant purity.

67. Although the vast Bodhisattva practices are  
beyond enumeration,  
When abbreviated they collect into two themes:  
Those dealing with methods and those  
dealing with wisdom.  
These two are the father and mother  
Producing Bodhisattva children.
68. Those interested in becoming Bodhisattvas  
Should make their father and mother  
The practice of method and wisdom  
Locked in an inseparable union.
69. When method and wisdom are separated.  
The path will lack the ability  
To produce a Bodhisattva child,  
Just as a man and woman who do not unite  
Will not produce any offspring.  
To separate the two is bondage.
70. Constantly meditate on correct aspiration,  
Which is said to be the root of all Dharma.  
Cultivate and increase the mind of practice like  
the waxing moon,  
Until it becomes strong and firm.
71. When the mind of practice is surging,  
There is no doubt that one's practice will grow,  
Like plants in moist and fertile earth.
72. With the mind of practice strong,  
One can prolongedly carry the burden of the  
trainings  
Without frustration or fatigue,  
And thus quickly complete the sublime path.

73. Direct all energies into generating  
The accumulations of merit and wisdom  
Through means such as the ten ways of Dharma.
74. When still an initial disciple,  
It is important to make one's basis firm  
Through application to the two accumulations,  
For this gives birth to all Dharma Knowledge,  
Possesses the power to fulfil the needs of the world  
And as its fruit produces the form  
And wisdom bodies of Buddhahood.
75. The essence of the combined method and  
wisdom practice  
Is the meditation of *shamatha* united with  
*vipashyana*.  
These two produce all the happiness  
Of the world and beyond.
76. In order to develop clairvoyance  
And the beyond samsara paths,  
One should first cultivate *shamatha*.  
If one's samatha practice is weak  
One will gain no power, even through  
sustained efforts.  
Therefore accomplish the trainings  
In the various levels of samadhi.
77. Avoid all factors that hinder samadhi  
And cultivate conducive factors,  
Applying the eight forces for  
eliminating negativities.  
This is the rubbing stick  
Free from the moisture of attachment

For igniting the fire of the spiritual path.  
Meditate in this way with intensity.

78. To win the battle against delusion,  
Make *shamatha* the basis  
For the meditation upon *vipashyana*.  
To encourage growth in the meditation,  
Between sessions, when you have risen from  
formal sitting,  
Look upon all phenomena in the light of the  
eight similes that  
Demonstrate the illusory, *maya* nature of existence.
79. One should thus cultivate post-meditational  
insight,  
Placing the emphasis on the method side of  
practice.  
During meditational sittings,  
Practice *shamatha* and *vipashyana* in equal balance,  
Constantly engaging the two together.
80. This combined twofold practice  
Brings attainment of the four stages,  
Such as heat (of the path of application)  
And gives birth to the gradual unfoldment of the  
wisdom of the ten stages,  
Quickly producing the state of perfect  
enlightenment.  
Then like a magic gem, one can easily fulfil the  
needs of others.
81. If a text is too short,  
It is not easily understood;  
And, if too long, it becomes encyclopedic.



This work of mine aims at clarity  
In expressing the oral tradition teachings  
Without becoming lost in detail.

82. The qualities of my Gurus are vast as the ocean.  
Not shaken by worldly interests,  
They accomplished the essence of practice  
For the sake of the world.
83. Their skills were the manifold means  
Of opening the wisdom eye of the beings to  
the trained.  
They stressed that one should study and practice  
In accordance with the oral transmissions and  
the holy scriptures.
84. Thinking that their teachings  
May be of value to others,  
I herein wrote them out in words.
85. For anyone wishing to accomplish the essence of  
practice  
Who has the mental inclinations to engage in  
such a transmission,  
It is a source of spiritual fulfillment  
Of one's own and others' needs.

Colophon: This brief text, "A Summary of the Means  
for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path"  
was written by Atisha Dipamkara Shri-  
jnana. It was translated (from Sanskrit into  
Tibetan), checked and finalized by the  
master (Atisha) himself, together with the  
translator and monk Ge-wai Lo-dro.



CHAPTER III

**A LETTER GARLAND OF STAINLESS GEMS<sup>1</sup>**

Skt. Vimala-ratna-leka

**Tib. Dri-ma-med-pai-rin-po-chei-phring-yig**

Homage to the spiritual masters.

Homage to the exalted Tara.

1. Hail the (King) Nirya-phala<sup>2</sup>,  
Who was born in Maha-ghati.  
May he strive to make flourish the Buddha-dharma  
And use Dharma as his guide in caring for  
his kingdom.
2. O mighty one, you have now attained to great glory  
And are as a god on earth.  
This is because in previous lives  
You were long familiar with spiritual ways  
Such as generosity, the ten courses of virtue, purification, patience and joyous enthusiasm.
3. Respectfully place upon your head  
The Dharma tradition, using as your guide in life  
The oral teachings of the Gurus  
And the words of the Sutras and Shastras.  
This will benefit both yourself and others.

4. Abandon hesitant attitudes  
And apply yourself boldly in practice.  
Lessen sleep, apathy and laziness  
And apply yourself with zealous energy.
5. Guard the doorways of experience  
With mindfulness, alertness and vigilance.  
Three times each day and night  
Formally observe the streams of your thoughts.
6. Be like an eye always seeing your own faults  
But be like a blind person toward the faults of  
others.  
Be without arrogance and pride,  
Meditating constantly on the meaning of  
emptiness and non-self.
7. Freely admit your own faults to others  
And do not mind the falsity of others.  
When speaking of others, mention only their  
good qualities;  
And keep your own accomplishments secret.
8. Avoid attachment to gain and respect,  
An abandon hopes of achieving fame.  
Meditate instead on love and compassion  
And make firm the bodhimind, the altruistic  
aspiration for enlightenment.
9. Avoid the ten negative karmic ways  
And abide within firm conviction.  
Have few needs, be content with what comes  
And always repay kindness shown to you.

10. Avoid anger and pride,  
Constantly maintaining humble attitudes.  
Leave behind wrong ways of living  
And dedicate yourself to a spiritual life.
11. Totally abandon all objects of attachment  
And become enriched by the jewels of spiritual  
experience.  
Avoid meaningless social activities  
And live quietly in solitude.
12. Avoid meaningless conversations  
And always control your speech.  
Whenever you meet with your Guru or  
ordination master  
Behave with the traditional signs of respect.
13. Toward highly evolved spiritual beings,  
Practitioners possessing the eye of knowledge  
And even those on initial stages in spiritual  
experience,  
Generate the attitude which sees them as  
one's teacher.
14. When meeting with any sentient being  
Afflicted by suffering,  
Generate thoughts of the bodhimind  
And regard them with the love that parents show  
an only child.
15. Avoid worldly activities  
And constantly meditate on samadhi.  
Stay away from misleading people  
And rely upon the spiritual masters.

16. Yet when you see fallen monks,  
People weak in practice  
And those who live evil lives,  
Do not be callous toward them.
17. However, do not stay for more than three days  
With false Gurus or indulgent friends,  
Or those having no respect for the Gurus,  
Three Jewels, abbots and acharyas,  
Or those who do not appreciate kindness.
18. Nor should you stay more than three days with  
Those who are concerned with the things of this  
life alone  
Or those with no interest in practice.  
Avoid states of anger and displeasure  
And behave as produces happiness in others.
19. Eliminate the habit of grasping at things  
And live free from attachment.  
With attachment there is no way to evolve to  
happiness.  
It severs the very life of liberation.
20. Always try to live  
Near a spiritual master.  
Rely upon the spiritual masters  
And constantly read the Sutras.
21. Whatever is undertaken first  
Should firstly be accomplished  
Before going on to a second pursuit  
Otherwise, neither will be completed.

22. Freely admit your spiritual failings  
And strive to generate creative energy.  
As much as possible live in harmony with worldly  
conventions  
And protect others minds from harm.
23. Whenever the mind becomes inflated,  
Counteract the pride with humility.  
Whenever the mind becomes separated from  
vigilance,  
Recollect the precepts of the Gurus.
24. Whenever the mind feels feint in its endeavours,  
Encourage and uplift it.  
Practise mindfulness of the perfection of wisdom  
And pacify all mental projections.
25. When objects of attachment or aversion appear,  
See them as magical emanations.  
When you hear unpleasant words,  
Regard them as echos in a cave.
26. As for physical difficulties,  
Whenever they occur  
Regard them as the product  
Of your own previous karmic deeds.
27. Live in a quiet place well beyond  
The limits of towns and cities,  
Like the corpse of an animal that had run to  
solitude.  
Hide yourself in a life of peace,  
Anonymous to and unknown by everybody.



28. Make always firm the practice of deity yoga.<sup>3</sup>  
Whenever desire, harmful thoughts,  
Sleep, dullness, laziness or apathy arise,  
Place the blame upon yourself  
And remember the essence of the training.
29. Contemplate impermanence and death.  
When in the presence of others,  
Speak calmly, intelligently  
And with conscientious sincerity.
30. Avoid scornful, unpleasant expressions  
And always wear a smile.  
Be unselfish, taking joy in generosity,  
Always remain free from jealousy.
31. Be concerned with the feelings of others  
And avoid all conflicts.  
Do not feign friendship nor be a fickle friend.  
Try to remain constant and firm,  
Dwelling always in patience toward others.
32. Live simply and in moderation.  
Regard yourself always as the lowest  
Of all those present, being like servant to them.  
Cultivate dignity and modesty,  
And strive to earn the respect of others.
33. Maintain the disciplines well.  
Avoid looking down upon others  
And live in respect for them.  
When speaking of the teachings to others,  
Possess the altruistic mind of compassion.

34. Venerate the holy doctrine of enlightenment  
And never abandon the teachings.  
Honour the Three Jewels of Refuge  
And meditate upon the pure void nature  
Of practitioner, practice and practising.
35. Three times each day and night  
Meditate upon compassion  
And recite *The Sutra of Three Parts*<sup>4</sup>  
Famed also as *The Seven Offerings*.
36. Offer vast prayers for the elimination  
Of the sufferings of the world,  
That the sentient beings may be spiritually matured  
And the state of enlightenment attained.  
Dedicate all to the great enlightenment.
37. Our resolution to practise should be  
Something scanning a vast panorama of time.  
Were one to apply oneself in this way,  
The two accumulations would be fulfilled.
38. We have attained a meaningful human rebirth  
Able to gain enlightenment in one lifetime, able  
To fulfill the needs of oneself and others  
And to attain to a Buddha's twofold greatness.
39. Even though the coo coo birds sing most sweetly  
in springtime,  
The peacock is not shy to sing out its less  
sweet sound.  
Similarly, although there exist many teachings by  
many masters,  
I have written this to you, O King, that it may  
help clear any confusion.

40. Consider the meaning of this advice written with  
the thought to benefit.  
Feel free to pass it on to others who may have an  
interest.  
Constantly meditate on the Six Great Divinities,  
Keeping the commitment practice purely.  
Care for your kingdom as advised in the scriptures,  
And please, O king, forgive my impertinence.

Colophon: "A letter Garland of Stainless Gems"  
written in forty stanzas by the Maha-  
strivira Dipamkara Shrijnana to King  
Nirya-phala. At the same time it was trans-  
lated into Tibetan by the master himself  
with the translator and monk Tsul-trim  
Gyal-wa.



**CHAPTER IV**  
**A GUIDE TO THE TWO TRUTHS**

**Skt. Satya-dvaya-avatara**

**Tib. bDen-pa-gnyis-la-jug-pa**

**Homage to great compassion.<sup>1</sup>**

1. The Dharma taught by the Buddhas  
Is based upon the doctrine of the two levels of  
truths:  
The conventional truth that deceives the world  
And the ultimate level, the truth of highest  
significance.
2. Two kinds of conventional truth are asserted:  
Distorted and valid.  
The first of these is also of two types:  
That likened to a moon reflected in water  
And that formed by wrong philosophy.
3. As for valid conventional truth,  
This refers to functional phenomena,  
Things which are created and destroyed,  
As experienced without deep analysis.
4. Ultimate truth is singular,  
Conventional truth is multiple.

How can one speak of a second or third  
(ultimate truth)

When (the ultimate) refers to the Dharmata  
not produced in any way?

5. The Dharmata is indicated by doctrinal words  
such as 'unborn' and 'undying'.  
Because ultimately it is beyond duality,  
There is no division into basis and essential nature.
6. There is no multiplicity  
In emptiness, (the ultimate truth):  
When one realizes in the manner of non-realization,  
We conventionally say, 'emptiness is seen'.
7. In the Sutras on profound emptiness<sup>2</sup> it is said  
That no seeing is itself seeing.  
In this there is neither seeing nor seen,  
No beginning, no end; all things at rest.
8. The ultimate level of truth is beyond simile.  
In it there is neither phenomena nor  
non-phenomena,  
No realization, no object of realization,  
No abiding and no place in which to abide,  
No coming and no going.<sup>3</sup>
9. It is inexpressible, unimaginable,  
Unchanging and non-composite,  
And the yogi who realizes it  
Destroys the obscuring delusions and  
obscurations to knowledge.
10. Buddhist speak of two types of perception:  
Direct and inferential.

Ignorant people of mundane view say  
That emptiness is perceived through these two.

11. (However, if this is correct) it will follow  
That Hindus and Shravakas also see Dharmata.  
Why even mention the Vijñanavadins?  
And of course (emptiness) does not contradict  
the Madhyamikas.
12. In that case we would have to agree  
That all schools are correct and in harmony.  
But as their views in fact are diverse,  
If we accept all as valid we must accept  
That there are numerous ultimate truths.  
Won't we end up with a few too many ultimates?
13. Therefore there is no need to speak of  
Direct and inferential perception in reference  
to emptiness.  
The masters have spoken like this  
Merely to turn away Hindu criticism.
14. It is clearly stated in the scriptures  
That one cannot apprehend emptiness  
With either the conceptual or  
non-conceptual mind.  
The great master Bhāvaviveka<sup>4</sup> said this.
15. How then does one apprehend emptiness?  
This was clarified by Nāgārjuna, who  
Was prophesied by Buddha himself  
And who saw the truth of Dharmata.  
It was further clarified by his student Chandrakīrti.  
One gains insight into the Dharmata truth  
Through the tradition coming from them.



16. All 84,000 aspects of the teachings  
Lead to and fall upon this very Dharmata.  
All other meditations are practised to  
    supplement it;  
For realization of emptiness brings final liberation.
17. However, if one ignores the valid conventional  
    level of truth  
While meditating on profound emptiness,  
One will mishandle conventional truths such as  
Good and bad, cause and effect, etc.,  
And will suffer in this and future lives.
18. To practise with insufficient learning  
Will not produce realization of the final meaning  
    of emptiness.  
Also, people who do not generate positive  
    spiritual energy  
Become lost to the world of negativity.
19. Those of little wisdom apprehend emptiness  
    incorrectly  
And as a consequence are destroyed.<sup>5</sup>
20. Acharya Chandrakirti himself wrote that  
All methods belong to conventional truth.  
Ultimate truth is what arises from them.  
Anyone not understanding this distinction  
Generates mistaken awareness and  
Falls into the lower realms of being.
21. If one does not rely upon conventional truth,  
One will not gain insight into ultimate truth.

Without ascending the steps of (understanding)  
valid conventional truth,  
It is impossible to enter into  
The mansion of perfect understanding.

22. If we look for the nature of the objects  
Appearing on the conventional level of truth,  
We find nothing whatsoever.  
This not finding of the unfindable  
Is the experience of the ultimate truth,  
The Dharmata pure since the beginning.
23. Things existant on the conventional level  
Are established as they appear  
Because of their causes and conditions.  
If it is not correct that they are so established,  
Then, who created the moon's reflection in water?
24. Therefore it is said that conventional things exist  
Because they have their causes and conditions.  
When the stream of conditions supporting  
A conventional phenomenon is broken,  
That phenomenon no longer arises.
25. Because of this (nature of relativity),  
One avoids falling into wrong paths  
And ascends to the highest state  
By means of unconfused view  
And by abiding in pure practice.
26. This life is short and the objects  
of knowledge are many.  
Moreover, how long our lives will last is  
unknown to us,

Therefore, be like the swan, who when  
drinking milk,  
Can extract the desired cream  
And spit out the unneeded water.<sup>6</sup>

27. It is said to be improper to speak of  
The two levels of truth to confused worldly people.  
However, relying upon the teachings of my Gurus,  
I have penned this presentation of Nagarjuna's  
tradition on the two truth<sup>7</sup>  
At the request of the King of Indonesia.
28. Should anyone have an interest in it,  
They should scrutinize it carefully.  
To accept it out of faith  
Without scrutiny is inappropriate.
29. The Indonesian King Guru-phala  
Sent the monk Deva-mati to me  
With the request for a brief work  
On the two levels of truth.  
Therefore this was written for him;  
Contemporary scholars may judge it for  
themselves.

The Colophon: "Cultivating an Understanding of the  
Two Levels of Truth" by the Acharya and  
Maha-pandita Dipamkara Shrijnana is thus  
complete. It was translated into Tibetan  
(from the original Sanskrit) edited and  
finalized by the master himself and the  
translator Lotsawa Gya-tsun-drub Seng-ge.



**CHAPTER V**  
**THE THREE HIGHER TRAININGS<sup>1</sup>**

*by*  
**His Holiness The Dalai Lama**

These days the peoples of the east and west have come into an increasingly close contact with one another especially in the spheres of religion and philosophy. This provides an excellent opportunity for us all.

All religions of the world are basically only methods for turning the living beings toward positive, creative ways. Each religion has its own particular characteristics, and therefore it is important for all of us to learn from each other.

Religion is not something to be taken for granted and practised as a cultural relic. Our practice has to have a more conscious direction. When this is lost, there is no point in following a religious tradition. Religion does not exist in a temple; it only exists in the minds of people.

Whether or not we practise religion is our own prerogative, as is the decision for which religion we ourselves shall follow. The external traditions and practices that look so glamorous are not what we need;

what is important is to learn to practise the essence. This applies to all religions.

A Buddhist is someone who takes refuge in the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Teachings and the spiritual community. The basis of the teachings is compassion.

How do Buddhists view the Three Jewels? The Buddha is like a teacher or doctor, the Teachings are like our teachers advice and like medicine, and the spiritual Community are like exemplary practitioners, and like a nurse. The Buddha is the founder of refuge, the Teachings are the actual refuge, and the Spiritual Community, friends in the activity of cultivating this sense of refuge. Thus the real refuge is Dharma or the Teachings. Therefore whether or not we gain the benefits of refuge depends completely upon how well we practise the Teachings.

A Sutra states,

The Buddhas cannot wash away our sins with  
water,

Nor can they remove suffering with their hands.  
They cannot transfer their insight to us.  
All they can do is teach the Dharma.

And also,

I am my own protector.

Thus it is clearly stated that the responsibility for practice and accomplishment lies in our own hands.

Buddhists do not accept the theory of 'God the Creator.' In our belief all our happiness and misery are the product of our own karma, our own previous actions. Whether or not we experience happiness or misery depends upon whether or not we have gained

control of our mind. Therefore we should dedicate all efforts to taming our mind.

The basis of all inner faults is the presence of ignorance. We do not see the deeper nature of the mind. This ignorance is eliminated by engaging the methods for cultivating wisdom of the ultimate mode of existence. This ultimate mode is not perceived by the sensory consciousness, which perceives only external phenomena. It is understood by the mental consciousness itself.

The mental consciousness we live with at the moment is very coarse. Afflicted by distraction and agitation, it is unable to grasp higher vision. Deeper truth cannot be perceived in its actual mode. Therefore we must develop one-pointed concentration and refine the mind. The concentrated mind is the mind of samadhi. To gain the mind of samadhi, which is free from even subtle mental agitation, we must first gain control over our activities of body and speech. When body and speech are controlled, the higher qualities of mind are easily cultivated. The application of this control of body and speech as a means to tame the mind is what is meant by the training in discipline.

Wisdom is the sword that cuts off the very root of the deluded mind. Samadhi provides the strength making wisdom effective. Finally, discipline provides us with conditions conducive to the generation of samadhi.

The three categories of scripture—*Abhidharma-pitaka*, *Sutra-pitaka* and *Vinaya pitaka*—are the respective sources of these three trainings.

Vasubandhu says in his *Abhidharma-kosa*,

The Dharma of Buddha is twofold:  
Scriptural and realization.



Here 'Scriptural Dhama' refers to the Three Categories of Scriptures. Realization Dharma refers to the three higher trainings: discipline, samadhi and wisdom.

How one practises these three higher trainings makes the distinction of whether one is a Hinayana or Mahayana practitioner. When one's aim is personal nirvana these three trainings only have the ability to eliminate the obscurations to liberation, or the *klesa-avarana*, and one's path becomes Hinayana. When one's aim is not personal nirvana but rather full Buddhahood for the benefit of all living beings, these trainings acquire the power to remove the obscurations to knowledge, or the *nyer-avarana*, and one's path becomes Mahayana. This latter category includes the Vajrayana, or the secret Buddhist Tantras. Here a special tantric samadhi grasped by the bodhimind aspiration is the basis being used.

The above refers to all forms of Buddhism. Concerning Tibetan Buddhism in particular there is no basic differences in the fundamental doctrine or approach. However, a characteristic of Tibetan Buddhism is that it integrates all the various forms of Buddhism. From the Hinayana scriptures we practice the three higher trainings; on top of this we have the Bodhisattva trainings as elucidated in the *Bodhisattva-pitaka*, and on top of that the secret Vajrayana practices. In this way one practitioner can integrate all levels and aspects of the Buddha's teachings into his/her personal practice. It is not that the early Indian Buddhist tantric yogis did not study and practice the Bodhisattva or Sravaka scriptures, but in Tibet a special effort at integrating the three was stressed. All four great Tibetan sects—Nyingma, Kargyu, Sakya and Geluk—take the Bodhisattva attitude as the basis, and

upon this basis cultivate the Madhyamaka Prasangika view of emptiness, and also insight into the secret Vajrayana methods. The differences between the four lie more in the time of introduction of the various lineages, the places where the lineages were preserved, etc. which resulted in minor cultural variations. There are no fundamental doctrinal differences, but because of differences in time and place each lineage has slightly different ways of handling technical vocabulary and of describing personal experiences in practice.

Before Buddhism came to Tibet our religion was known as Bon. Now almost all Tibetans are Buddhists, although there are still some Bon practitioners left.

Now I would like to say something about each of the three higher trainings.

## THE HIGHER TRAINING IN DISCIPLINE.

The Sanskrit word for discipline is *shila* or control. It is so called because the effect of discipline is to control and pacify the scorching misery of the delusions.

Nagarjuna states in his *Friendly Letter* (Skt. Surelleka):

Like the earth supports everything,  
both animate and inanimate,  
Similarly discipline is the basis of all  
good qualities.

Generally speaking there are two forms of discipline to be cultivated: the informal discipline of restraining from the ten types of negative actions (i.e., killing, stealing, etc.) and the formal vows of restraint. Of the latter category, this includes the *pratimoksha* disciplines

(Hinayana); Bodhisattva disciplines (Mahayana) and Mantra disciplines (Vajrayana). Here, the essence of the first of these is to avoid harming others, the essence of the second is to avoid self-interest, and the essence of the third is to cut off ordinary perception of the world.

There are no special categories of discipline to be maintained in the Bodhisattva and Vajrayana trainings in terms of whether one is male or female. The trainings are indetical for both sexes.

The *pratimoksha* discipline is as follows. One is moved not from a desire to imitate others, but rather, becoming disgusted with cyclic existence, the mind develops renunciation and generates the special virtue of the vow to abstain from faults of body and speech, such as causing harm to others.

There are eight types of the *pratimoksha* vow: the one day vow; those of layman and laywoman; novice monks and nun, probationary nun; and fully ordained monk and nun.<sup>2</sup> The first of these is the one day vow. Here there are four root and four branch vows. The former four are the disciplines of avoiding (a) sex (b) stealing (c) killing humans and (d) pretending to have higher realization. The four branch precepts are to avoid (a) using high or expensive beds; (b) alcohol; (c) Singing, dancing, ornaments, perfumes, make-up etc.; and (d) eating after noontime.

The one day vow is call *nyer-ney* in Tibetan, or 'close abiding' because the nature of the practice is in the direction and proximity of liberation. The vow can be taken by both males and females, but is not divided into two categories on this basis because its duration is too short.

The second category is twofold, that is, the vows of a layman and laywoman. Here there are five vows, of

which four resemble the root vows above, with the exception that celibacy is replaced with the avoiding of improper sexual habits (adultery etc.) The fifth vow is to avoid alcohol.

The Tibetan name for this vow is *Ge-nyen*, or 'close to virtue' because through maintaining these vows one comes close to the virtue of nirvana. As stated above, this constitutes two of the *pratimoksha* categories, the male and female trainings being counted separately.

Thirdly is the disciplines for novice monks and nuns. Here there are four root vows corresponding to the four root one day vows above, such as celibacy etc.; and six auxiliary vows. This latter category includes (a) avoiding singing, dancing and music; (b) avoiding ornaments, necklaces, perfumes, etc.; (c) accepting gold or silver; (d) drinking alcohol; (e) eating after noon-time; (f) and using a high or costly bed. Together with the four root vows this comprises the ten main trainings of a novice.

In addition to these ten there are three supplementary trainings: not failing to request one's ordination master for advice in important matters; not failing to avoid the signs of a householder; and not failing to maintain the signs of a ordination. In all there are thirty six vows, although they are all sudsumed under the above topics. Again two *pratimoksha* categories are included here, one for males and one for females.

The Tibetan for novice monk is *Ge-tsul* and for novice nun *Ge-tsul-ma*. Here *ge* means virtue and *tsul* the way, for by means of entering this way one enters the path leading to the virtue of nirvana.

Next is the ordination of a probationary nun. On top of the novice nun vows there are the six root factors such as not travelling without the company of a

friend in discipline, etc.; and the six similar factors such as not accepting gold or silver etc. These vows are called probationary because they are used as preliminary trainings to entering into the vows of a fully ordained nun.

Lastly is the twofold category of a fully ordained monk or nun. The former of these includes the four defeats, such as non-celibacy; the thirteen remainders such as releasing sperm; thirty specific downfalls, such as hoarding clothing for more than ten days etc.; the ninety minor downfalls, such as knowingly lying etc.; the four individual confessions, such as accepting food from a fully ordained nun who is not a relative; and the hundred and twelve minor transgressions, such as not wearing the lower robe correctly (evenly) etc. Thus in all there are two hundred and fifty three vows to be maintained.

A fully ordained nun maintains three hundred and sixty four vows: eight defeats; twenty remainders; thirty specific downfalls; a hundred and eighty minor downfalls; eleven individual confessions; and a hundred and twelve minor transgressions.

The Tibetan terms for a fully ordained monk and nun are *Ge-long* and *Ge-long-ma*. Here *Ge* means virtue and *long* to seek; for a fully ordained person seeks with full intensity the path leading to the virtuous state of nirvana.

There are different ways to classify the eight *prati-moksha* disciplines described above. One is from the viewpoint of the recipient or trainee. Here the one day vow and the vows of a layman and laywoman are categorized together as non-Sangha ordinations. The remaining five, of novice monk and nun, probationary nun and fully ordained monk and nun, are exclusively

Sangha ordinations.

In the *pratimoksha* disciplines the main effort is to control the body and speech against fallacious action. For example, all 253 vows of a fully ordained monk are concerned with eliminating faults of body and speech.

On the other hand, the Bodhisattva and Vajrayana disciplines are mainly concerned with controlling the mind from fallacious activity. Here an inner resolve is made and inner negative conditions guarded against. The effort is internal, not external. The *pratimoksha* disciplines deal with controlling gross external faults as a means of paving the way for controlling subtle inner faults through the Bodhisattva and Vajrayana disciplines. Therefore those interested in accomplishing the path should take one form of *pratimoksha* ordination in accordance with personal capacity as a basis for the higher trainings of Bodhisattva and mantra paths. Buddha himself, although born as prince, abandoned his kingdom and adopted higher discipline. In dependence on this he achieved higher samadhi, and in dependence on higher samadhi attained higher wisdom and eventually the state of full enlightenment. We who claim to follow the Buddhist path should try to follow in his footsteps and train as did he.

When we practice the Vajrayana it may seem that the tantric disciplines contradicted those of the *pratimoksha*. If we read the biographies of the eighty-four mahasiddhis we see many examples of them behaving in apparent contradiction to the *pratimoksha* disciplines. However, generally the trainings are non-contradictory. These individuals were merely on a higher plane of existence and therefore could engage in exceptional activities without danger of being overwhelmed by the conceptual mind.

## THE HIGHER TRAINING IN SAMADHI

The purpose of the training in samadhi is that one gains mental stability and thus generates a more effective mind. For example, when we study something we can see how much more useful a single-pointed mind is than a mind that constantly wanders away from the subject.

Samadhi is the ability to abide without effort on an object of meditation for as long as one wants. When this has been attained one experiences a blissful suppleness and efficiency of mind, and on reliance on this one gains the preparatory stages of *dhyana*. This is common to Buddhists and non-Buddhists. The object taken as the visualized subject for the development of samadhi may be either internal or external. In the Vajrayana the object may be oneself as a tantric deity; the chakras and nadis; or the bodily energies. However, the object is always something observed by the mind itself and not by the sensory consciousnesses.

In order to achieve samadhi one must first learn to sit correctly. This means the seven-point posture of Vairochana.

One sits in the full or half vajra posture with the eyes cast upon the line of the nose. The back must be kept straight with the spine like a pile of coins stacked one upon the other. The shoulders should be straight, the hands held below the navel in the meditation posture, the thumbs touching and right hand upon the left. The neck is held at a slight inclination to the front, with no movement to right or left being allowed. The teeth and lips are lightly closed in a natural posture, with the tongue held lightly on the upper palate. Finally sometimes an eighth point is mentioned which involves

controlling the breath.

This is called the seven point posture of Vairochana as it resembles the iconographic representation of the meditational Buddha Vairochana, symbol of the pure nature of our aggregate of form.

No matter what object of meditation one adopts here, the important thing is to hold it in the mind without wandering. In the beginning we forget and lose the object almost as soon as we envision it, and therefore it is important to cultivate clarity and stability.

The two most important tools in the creation of samadhi are mindfulness and alertness. When the mind sinks into sleepiness or depression we must encourage it, and if it wanders we should bring it down.

People who have worldly responsibilities should practice at least one daily session of this meditation. This is best done in the morning. Alternatively, if one can dedicate oneself totally to the practice in order to develop samadhi, one should begin each session before the calming effects of the earlier session are lost.

To undertake the training in accordance with the Vajrayana, the most profound method is to meditate on the chakras and nadis. However, if one does not follow this practice under the closely supervised guidance of a qualified teacher one can damage the subtle energy channels.

When one takes oneself in the form of a tantric deity as the object, this does not mean we dress ourselves up with many false arms and faces, etc. and make ourselves look like a specific deity. Rather, one first meditates on emptiness, purifying our self-image in this sphere. We then arise with the self-identification of ourselves as the meditational deity. When this is done our ordinary appearance does not interfere with the vision of our-



selves as the deity.

Should one be able to sit in meditation for four hours or so without forgetting the object of meditation and without falling prey to sinking or wandering, this is the sign of accomplishment. Thereafter one gains a sense of immateriality of external object such as mountains, houses, etc., and gains a special bliss and pliancy of body and mind.

To accomplish samadhi one must first cultivate the nine stages of meditative serenity. These are accomplished by the six forces. In the process we go through four mental states. We should know these points well before engaging in the practice.

First of the six forces is that of hearing the instruction on cultivating samadhi. One applies these, focussing on the subject without allowing the mind to wander to externals. This is the first of the nine stages, called abiding inside.

Then by meditating with mindfulness and alertness one gains the second force, that of intent. With this one meditates prolongedly without allowing wandering. Thus the extent of time one is able to hold the object in mind is extended. This is the second stage, that of 'abiding prolongedly'.

During these two stages one falls prey to sinking and agitation, only but rarely gaining clarity and this at much effort. Therefore these two stages are associated with the mental function of effort.

The third force is mindfulness. With it one can immediately recognise when the mind has wandered astray and can bring it back. Thus it is called 'returning to abide'. After that the power of mindfulness naturally increases, preventing mental wandering and imbuing the mind with greater focus powers and subtlety. This

in turn produces the fourth stage, 'proximate abiding'.

The fourth force is alertness. Knowing the faults of wandering to the objects of the conceptual mind, one does not allow this wandering to happen. Contemplating the excellence of samadhi one becomes filled with joy. This leads to the fifth stage, 'pacification.'

After this one becomes more alert to the pitfalls of mental wandering. This halts disinterest with samadhi, giving the mind a burst of energy that brings about the sixth stage, 'serenity.'

The fifth force is enthusiastic energy. Here even subtle negativities, such as attachment, wandering, etc. are eliminated as soon as they arise. This leads to the seventh stage, 'total pacification'.

From the third to the seventh stage the mind can occasionally enter absorption, yet there is constant danger from mental sinking and agitation. Therefore during this period we operate under the mental function of interruption to abiding.

Here one uses enthusiastic energy in applying mindfulness and alertness. The obstacles therefore can no longer make problems and one is able to abide in samadhi without difficulty. This is the eighth stage, 'one-pointedness.'

At this point there is no obstacles if one makes small efforts. Therefore it is associated with the third mental function, 'uninterrupted absorption'.

One continues to meditate. The sixth force, 'thorough familiarity' is now integrated. Mindfulness and alertness no longer need be applied, for the meditation continues without interruption almost automatically. This is the ninth stage, 'tranquil abiding'. The meditation operates on its own strength, like a person reciting a memorized text need not concentrate on

what he is saying in order to continue the recitation. Thus from among the mental functions this is that known as 'effortless activity'.

There are here two types of samadhis, the distinction being made on the basis of whether or not the meditation is grasped by the special blissful pliancy of body and mind. When the nine stages are accomplished one clears away all negative mental activity preventing the flow of virtue in one's mind, and then generates the special pliant suppleness of mind. By this force one can eliminate negative factors of the body and gain special physical blissfulness and pliancy. This gives rise to physical ecstasy, and as a result great bliss is experienced in the mind. After this the bliss subsides and one gains the ability to meditate in complete serenity on any desired object of meditation. In dependence on this one acquires many excellent qualities both worldly and transcendental. Therefore we should dedicate ourselves with all efforts to generating samadhi.

## THE HIGHER TRAINING IN WISDOM

Once one has gained firm stability in the discipline of avoiding fallacious activity of body and speech, and has eliminated the torpor and agitation of the mind by means of the higher training in samadhi, one should take up the higher training in wisdom. Wisdom is important to all substantial progress, be it internal or external.

Arya Nagarjuna stated,

The root of all excellences  
Both seen and unseen  
Is nothing other than wisdom.

Generally wisdom is of two types: that of insight into the conventional knowledge of the five sciences; and that of insight into the highest knowledge of ultimate reality.

The basis of the Buddhist view is that of relativity, or interdependent origination. In terms of a Mahayana practise common to the Sravaka and Pratyeka-buddha path, which are Hinayana, this refers to the meditation upon the twelve links of interdependent origination. These must be understood both in terms of how all links evolve from ignorance, and how the order of the links are reversed by the path of liberation.

Although there are many ways to speak of ignorance, in the Madhyamaka, school ignorance does not refer to the absence of wisdom but to the presence of a mental factor that sets up mental structures counteractive to the functioning and cultivation of wisdom. This is the ignorance which is the very root of samsaric existence. At the present moment we all have the thought of 'I am'. This mere I and the way it arises with the appearances of an independent entity is what causes the problem. When we interpret its existence in the manner of its appearance we fall under the syndrome of the innate I-grasping ignorance.

We should examine this I at a moment of sudden surprise or fear. At such moments the innate sense of I appears very clearly with great strength. This sense of a substantial I arises from the senses of inherent existence of the component aggregates of body and mind. Seeing the aggregates as truly existent, we come to think of the I as truly existent. On the basis of this misapprehension of the I we fall prey to the afflicted emotions such as attachment, aversion, etc.

Dharmakirti stated,

When we have the thought of I  
There arises the thought of others.  
From these two concepts  
Arises attachment and aversion.

Similarly, Chandrakirti said,

First we cling to the thought of 'I',  
From this arises the thought 'mine'.  
Thus the beings wander helplessly  
Like a bucket used for drawing water  
(goes up and down without let).<sup>3</sup>

Ignorance is the first of the twelve links. From it arise attachment and aversion, and from these all negative karmas. The *samskara* or energies of these karmas constitutes the second link. After generating a karma this force becomes inactive and leaves a karmic imprint on the mind. The mind carrying this imprint is the third link. This karma is of two types: positive and negative. The potency of this action is preserved and carried on the mind. This potency gives rise to the eighth and ninth links, namely, desire and craving.

These two forces—desire and craving—are activated at the time of death, thus engaging the karmic potency involved. This gives rise to the tenth link, which is becoming, or existence. From this arises birth, the eleventh link. Simultaneously the fourth link—name and form—is activated. A moment later the twelfth link begins, which is aging and death. With form as the perceived object and the sensory powers as the dominant condition, the preceding consciousness becomes an immediate condition for the fifth link, or the outer and inner factors of experience. This produces the sixth

link, which is contact. From this arises happiness and misery, or the seventh link, namely, sensation. In turn, grasping at these sensations as truly existent creates more karmic forces that initiate another set of links of dependent origination. In this manner the chain of events constituting samsaric existence is set in operation and is perpetuated.

The process is reversed as follows. To eliminate aging and death we must eliminate samsaric birth, or the eleventh link. To eliminate this we must cut off the tenth link, or becoming. For this we must in turn eliminate craving, and for this must eliminate desire. In turn to be free of desire we must eliminate sensations, the six contacts, the gates of samsaric experience, and name and form. For this we must in turn cut off the contaminated consciousness and the karmic seeds that it carries. Finally, to accomplish this we must rid ourselves of ignorance, the first link. Nagarjuna writes in his *The Root of Wisdom (mula-prajna-madhyamakarika)*

Ending karma and delusion is freedom.

Karma and delusion emanate forth

From the deluded, distorted mind.

This distortion comes from I grasping,

And is eliminated by meditation on emptiness.

Freedom from the stains of karma and delusion through absorbing the mind in a vision of truth itself is what is meant by nirvana. This is achieved by meditation on emptiness of true existence.

How does one cultivate the vision of non-inherent existence? The object refuted by emptiness, or the entity things are empty of, is a mind-created fabrication. It is imperative to eliminate the effects of this fabri-

cated reality from within our mindstream.

When we realize emptiness we do not destroy anything that exists. Normally we think a quality exists in things that in fact does not exist. We impute a quality upon things. When we realize emptiness nothing is destroyed within the object itself; rather, we see the imputed, fabricated quality as what it is, which is non-existent.

It does not help to simply say to ourselves that everything is empty of true existence. We must place the mind in a situation of observation of this truth by analysing the object in question.

The way of observing the nature of the self or I is briefly as follows. If the I were to exist inherently, then it must exist together with or separate from the aggregate. However, it can not be different because we can not find an I without depending on the aggregates of body and mind. Alternatively, if we observe the aggregates, again nothing can be found to represent the I. Thus we look for the truly existent I, but are unable to find it.

Likewise if we analyse all the things of this world for an inherent self nature, we do not find one.

Does this mean that nothing exists? Such could not be the case, for we can in fact experience pleasure and pain, progress and regression. Thus things seem to exist, but when we look closely for them, we can not find anything. This indicates that all things as we know them are mere mental projections.

Therefore because we see that things are not totally non-existent we are freed from the extreme of nihilism; and because we see they have no ultimate nature we are freed from the extreme of substantialism. This is the meaning of 'not existent' and 'not non-existent', so

often seen in the Madhyamaka scriptures.

Things are like an illusion and a dream: although they appear to the mind, they have no true existence.

Through meditating on emptiness the forces of attachment and aversion are gradually diminished. This in turn eventually destroys the hold that karmic forces exert over us.

Emptiness is experienced by means of identifying and eliminating the syndrome of grasping at a false I. Nothing is implied other than the absence of a false mental label.

In the beginning we must gain a basic idea of what wisdom is by means of study and contemplation. After this we should accomplish the practice of *samatha* and *vipassana* combined by applying our training in samadhi theory. When we begin meditating like this the idea of duality still appears, but gradually begins to diminish, until eventually all delusions of the mind are eliminated and final liberation is attained. When this is accomplished in conjunction with the altruistic Bodhi-sattva spirit, the obscurations to omniscience are also gradually destroyed and the state of full enlightenment, or Buddhahood, is attained. In addition to these methods, if one also integrates the various levels of Vajrayana practice one's attainment is produced much more quickly. Complete enlightenment can be attained in one short lifetime.



## FOOTNOTES

### CHAPTER I

1. Tsong Khapa's presentation of Atisha's life follows the structure of the *rNam-thar-rgyas-pa* of Nag-tso Lotsawa Tsul-trim Gyal-wa.
2. This Zahor is not to be confused with the Zahor mentioned in Guru Rinpoche's biography. This latter Zahor is the modern day Mandi of Himachal Pradesh.
3. Atisha includes a work by his brother Dana-shri in his *Chos-chung-rgya tsa*, or *Hundred Minor Texts*. The first twenty-five items in this collection, as well as the last, were penned by Atisha himself. The remaining short texts of the collection were selected and edited by him for the collection and include renowned works such as Nagarjuna's *Friendly Letter*, Ashvagosha's *Letter to King Kanishka*, Chandragomin's *Letter to a Disciple*, etc.
4. It is remarkable to note in Atisha's life the esteem shown to Hinayana doctrines in the Mahayana monasteries of North India at a time when the Hinayana as an independent tradition had almost disappeared from India. Atisha in turn encouraged this same appreciation for the Hinayana in Tibet, and it is largely due to him that today all Tibetan sects of Buddhism are a combination of Hinayana, general Mahayana and, Vajrayana doctrines.
5. This passage in his biography further substantiates our comment above in note four.
6. That is to say, insight meditation combined with meditative serenity. This is the heart of the Buddhist wisdom training.
7. These three famous debates occurred shortly after his return from Indonesia.
8. Although Tsong Khapa does not mention it, the invitation of Atisha was made at the request of King Yeshe Od, and at the

cost of the latters' life. Because of the bravery with which this great King sacrificed his life in order to bring Atisha to Tibet, the Indian authorities, who had been refusing Atisha permission to leave the country due to his importance as a teacher and monastic protector, finally conceded and permitted the master to go to Tibet.

9. Lama Drom is regarded by Tibetans as one of the most important predecessors of the line of Dalai Lamas. Although a layman, he excelled the thousands of monks who studied under Atisha and became his foremost successor. It was Lama Drom who created the Kadampa Order under Atisha, that was later to emerge as the New Kadam, or Geluk tradition.

## CHAPTER II

1. Classical Indian verse such as this is a blend of personal creativity and the borrowing of popular images, This 'borrowing' was considered an act of respect, not of plagerism. Atisha does most of his borrowing of images from Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Chandrakirti and Shantideva, indicating them as his favourite early writers. Also, as poetry of this nature is religious and mystical, the borrowing also indicates Gurus of the lineages held by Atisha.
2. Most text of this nature are arranged in four line verses. The present work is not, at least in its Tibetan translation. The Sanskrit is no longer extant. Stanzas vary from two to eight lines in length.
3. The Tibetan word *thos-pa* literally means 'hearing', the implication being that the learning should be acquired directly under a qualified Guru. The guidance of a Guru is considered fundamental to all spiritual progress in Buddhism.

## CHAPTER III

1. This work is very similar in content to Atisha's *Byang-chub-sems-dpa-nor-bui-'phreng-ba*, or *Jewel Garland of an Awakening Warrior*. A translation of the latter work was made by Ven. Doboom Tulku and Brian Beresford in *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* (Wisdom Publications, New Delhi, 1978). The main difference between the two texts is that *A Jewel Garland of*

*Stainless Advice* is in neat four-line verses and has a colophon attributing it to be written for a king. It would seem that our text was written first, and the second version was a condensed by Atisha for the Tibetans.

2. Most scholars assume this to be King Nirayana Phala of Magadha, Central India, a close friend of Atisha. After returning from Indonesia Atisha mediated a peace treaty between Nirayana Phala and a rival Hindu king of West India.

However, whether or not Nirya-phala can be identified with Nirayana Phala remains to be finally proven. As the colophon to our text in Chapter IV proves, there was also a Phala dynasty in Indonesia at the time, probably due to intermarriage with the Indians. The contact between the two countries was very close in this period.

3. Tib-Lhai-rnal-'byor; Skt. Deva-yoga. This refers to tantric practice, wherein the fundamental precept is to always see oneself as a tantric divinity.
4. Tib. *Phung-poo-gsum-gyi-mdo*. A translation of this together with a commentary by Arya Nagarjunā, appears in *Mahayana Purification Practices*, translated by Ven. Doboom Tulku and Brian Beresford (LTWA, Dharamsala, India, 1981).

## CHAPTER IV

1. Here Atisha styles his line of homage after that used by Chandrakirti in the latter's *Madhyamaka-avatara*, indicating that Atisha himself adheres to Chandrakirti's view. Perhaps due to Atisha, almost all Tibetans today consider this work by Chandrakirti of paramount importance in acquiring an understanding of Buddhist thought.
2. That is to say, the *Prajna-paramita Sutras*, or *Sutras on the Perfection of Wisdom*. The late Edward Conze translated most of these into English, dedicating much of his life to this monumental task.
3. These images are borrowed from the introductory section of Nagarjuna's *Mula-madhamaka-karika-shastra*, revealing Atisha's fondness for the classical Nagarjuna view.
4. Nagarjuna's school splintered into two factions due to the differing views of two of his later successors, namely, Bhavaviveka and Buddhapalita. Chandrakirti refuted much of the

former's philosophy and popularized that of the latter in his *Madhyamaka-avatara*. Atisha's preference for the philosophy of Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti is stated categorically in the verse that follows in our text.

5. These are two very famous lines from Nagarjuna's *Mula-prajna Madhyamaka-karika-shastra*, Chapter XXIV.
6. This is one of the most famous verses coined by Atisha, and one sees it quoted by hundreds of Tibetan authors throughout the centuries.
7. Tib. gSer-gling-rgyal-po-gu-ru-pha-la, which in Sanskrit would read Suvarnadivipi-rajā Guru Phala. As Atisha himself studied in a town fifteen miles from Borobodur, we may presume this to be a small Buddhist king in Central Java, probably at the town Pal-yon-chen, described by Tibetan geographers as "downstream from the Great Java Stupa, where the two rivers form an island (or peninsula) before dropping to the ocean".

## CHAPTER V

1. Our biography of Atisha in Chapter I is given in perspective to his mastery of the three higher trainings. We thought that in this context the present talk by His Holiness on the subject would be appropriate.
2. Although these eight categories are always listed, in Tibet only six of them exist at the present time.
3. This verse is discussed in great depth by Jeffery Hopkins in his *Compassion in Tibetan Buddhism*, Rider, London, 1980.

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