

The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path

Lama Tsongkhapa

*Translated into English, in its prayer form by Alexander Berzin,
Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition / www.fpmt.org*

1 I prostrate before you, foremost of the Shakya Clan. Your body is born from a host of positive actions and splendid attainments, your speech grants wishes of limitless beings. Your mind sees all knowables just as they are.

2 I prostrate before you, Maitreya and Manjushri, Supreme spiritual sons of this peerless teacher. Accepting the mantle (to enact) the full set of triumphant ones' deeds, You display emanations in countless worlds.

3 Before your feet, I prostrate, Nagarjuna and Asanga, (Gems) adorning the Southern Continent. Celebrated throughout the three realms, You have commented on the most difficult to fathom Mother of the Triumphant (The Prajnaparamita Sutra), In perfect accord with its intended meaning.

4 I bow before you, Dipamkara (Atisha), Holder of a fortune of instructions, Which encapsulate in full and without a mistake, The essential points of the paths of profound view and extensive behavior, In excellent lineage from these two outstanding pioneers.

5 Respectfully, I prostrate before you, my spiritual mentors, Eyes for beholding all the infinite scriptures, Superlative ford for the fortunate to cross to liberation. You clarify everything through skillful means, prompted by your loving-concern.

6 The stages of the path to enlightenment have passed down intact Through successive generations from Nagarjuna and Asanga, The crown jewels of all erudite masters of the Southern Continent, And the banner of whose fame flies gloriously above the wandering masses. As (following the stages) can fulfill, without an exception, The desired spiritual aims of the nine types of rebirth, They constitute a power-granting king of precious instruction. Because they gather within them the streams of myriad excellent classics, They comprise a veritable ocean of all-around perfect, correct explanation.

7 You understand all Buddha's teachings with no contradictions. The scriptural pronouncements, without an exception, dawn on your mind as personal guidelines. You easily discover the Triumphant One's intended meanings. They protect you from the abyss of the great misdeed (of forsaking the Dharma). Because of these (benefits), what scrutinizing persons among the erudite masters of India and Tibet Will not have their minds enraptured by the stages of the path of three spiritual scopes, The supreme instructions to which many fortunate ones have relied upon fully.

8 Although (positive potential accrues) from reciting or hearing even once (Atisha's) manner (of text) that fully encompasses The essential points of all scriptural pronouncements, Even greater waves of massive benefit, for certain, build up From actually teaching or studying the sacred Dharma (contained within). Therefore, consider the points (for doing this properly).

9 A healthy relation, (worked on) with effort in thought and action, With a holy spiritual mentor who indicates the path Is the root most appropriate for the dependent arising Of the hugest networks (of potential and awareness) for this and future lives. Seeing this, then (having taken the safe direction of refuge), Please (your mentors) by offering practice That accords with their enlightening words, Which you would not forsake even at the cost of your life. The ever-vigilant lama (Tsongkhapa) has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

10 This working basis (of a human life) with (eight) respites Is far more precious than a wish-granting gem. (A rebirth) like this is gained perhaps only once. Hard to acquire and easily lost, (it passes in a flash) like lightning in the sky. Considering (your precious human life) in these ways And realizing that (engaging in) any worldly activities Is like trying to winnow (something meaningful from) chaff, You must try to take the essence of life at all times, day and night. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

11 After death, there is no assurance of avoiding one of the worst rebirth forms. Yet, it is certain that the Three Supreme Gems provide safe direction away from any dread (of this fate). For these reasons, be extremely steadfast in taking their safe direction in life And unrelenting in following their points for training. (Success in not falling) further depends on considering well Which types of impulsive behavior are noble or dark, and what are their results, Then living by adopting (the former) and avoiding (the latter). The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

12 The fullest strides in actualizing the supreme paths will not come about Until attaining as a working basis (a precious human life) with a full set of (eight) definitional factors. Therefore, train in their causal (constructive acts), So that you will not be lacking in any of these (factors). As it is utterly essential to cleanse your three channels Of tarnishes from stains of negative potentials and from downfalls (from vows), And especially (to purge them of) obstacles from karma, Cherish healthy and continual reliance on a full set of four opponent forces. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

13 Without working hard at pondering true problems and their drawbacks, You will not properly gain keen interest in liberation (from them). Without considering the stages whereby (true) origins of suffering draw you into samsara, You will not see the means for cutting the root of this vicious circle. Therefore, relish knowing the factors that bind you to this wheel, Exuding disgust, and becoming determined to leave such existence. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

14 Developing and enhancing Bodhichitta is the bedrock for the Supreme Vehicle's paths. It is the basis and foundation for great waves of enlightening conduct. Like an elixir for transmuting into gold, (it transfigures into enlightening features) all aspects of the two networks (of potentials and awareness). It (builds up, day and night) a treasure of positive potential, amassed from an endless array of constructive acts. Realizing this, bodhisattvas take this supreme precious mind as their innermost bond. The ever-

vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

15 Total willingness to give is the wish-granting gem for fulfilling the hopes of wandering beings. It is the sharpest weapon to sever the knot of stinginess. It leads to bodhisattva conduct that enhances self-confidence and courage, And is the basis for universal proclamation of your fame and repute. Realizing this, the wise rely, in a healthy manner, on the outstanding path of (being ever-willing) to offer completely their bodies, possessions, and positive potentials. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

16 Ethical discipline is the water to wash away the stains of misdeeds. It is the ray of moonlight to cool the scorching heat of disturbing emotions. (With it, you stand out) amidst the nine kinds of beings, radiant like a Mount Meru. By its power, you bend all beings (to your positive influence) without (need for) mesmerizing stares. Realizing this, the holy ones safeguard, as they would their eyes, The vowed discipline that they have accepted purely. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

17 Patience (not to become angry or upset) is the best adornment for those holding power, And the perfect ascetic practice for those tormented by disturbing emotions. It is the high-soaring eagle as the enemy of the snake of hostility, And the thickest armor against the sharp weapons of abusive words. Realizing this, (the wise) accustom themselves, in various ways and forms, To (wearing) the padding of supreme patience. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

18 Once you suit up with the armor of resolute, unswayable positive enthusiasm, Your proficiency in scriptural understanding and in realization grow full like the waxing moon. Your entire mode of behavior takes on meaningful purpose, And you bring whatever you start to its intended conclusion. Realizing this, bodhisattvas exert great waves of positive enthusiasm, Washing away all laziness. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

19 Mental constancy is the king wielding power over the mind. When you fix it, it remains immovable like a mighty Mount Meru. When you project it, it fully engages in any constructive aim. It induces the exhilarating bliss of feeling physically and mentally fit. Realizing this, yogis with (mental) control continuously rely on absorbed concentration, in a healthy manner, Overcoming their enemy, mental distraction. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

20 Discriminating awareness is the eye for beholding profound (voidness), the actual way (in which everything exists). It is the pathway of mind for extracting the root of compulsive existence. It is the treasure of genius praised in all the scriptural pronouncements And is renowned as the most brilliant lamp for dispelling the darkness of naivety. Realizing this, those who are wise and who wish liberation

21 Single-pointed constancy of mind, on its own, lacks the perception That is able to sever the root of samsara. Discriminating awareness, parted from a stilled and settled pathway of mind, Cannot reverse disturbing emotions and attitudes, no matter how much it analytically discerns. But, when the discriminating awareness that can be totally decisive about how things exist Mounts the horse of an unwaveringly stilled and settled mind, And, with the lance of Madhyamaka logic, devoid of extremes, analytically discerns (voidness) correctly, destroying all underlying assumptions that would support any grasping for extremist views, That wide-ranging discriminating awareness expands the intelligence So that it realizes the actual way (in which everything exists). The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

22 Mentally abiding on how everything exists, unwaveringly, with total stability, While also (applying) the individualizing inspection that analytically discerns (voidness) correctly – What need to mention that it actualizes absorbed concentration through habituation with single-pointedness of mind, It increasingly enhances that absorbed concentration. Those who, seeing this, enthusiastically work to actualize a state of mind that is jointly stilled and settled and exceptionally perceptive are truly remarkable. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

23 Having meditated both on space-like voidness during total absorption And on illusion-like voidness as the subsequent realization, Combining the two as awareness and method Is acclaimed as “going to the far shore of bodhisattva conduct.” From this realization, being discontent with (achieving) a one-sided pathway of mind Is the tradition of those with good fortune (to attain enlightenment). The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

24 The causal and resultant Mahayana vehicles travel in common These pathways of mind as requirements for (reaching) the supreme pathway (enlightenment). The more that you increasingly enhance these (stages of the path), The more your attainment of (rebirth with) respites and endowments Becomes meaningful and effective (for reaching enlightenment) By depending on navigational guidance from tantric masters, Embarking on the vast ocean of tantra, And healthily relying on their full guideline instructions. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you too would seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

25 In order to accustom my mind (to these stages of the path) And also to benefit others of good fortune, I have explained here in easily understandable words The complete path that is pleasing to the buddhas. I pray that, by this constructive act, may all limited beings Never be parted from this pure and excellent path. The ever-vigilant lama has practiced like that. If you would also seek liberation, Please cultivate yourself in the same way.

Colophon:

This concludes The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path to Enlightenment, compiled in brief so that they may not be forgotten. It has been written at Ganden Namgyel Monastery on the Great Drog Mountain (Tibet) by the Buddhist monk, (Tsongkhapa) Lozang dragpa, a meditator who has heard many teachings.