

# THREE PRINCIPAL ASPECTS OF THE PATH

by Lama Tsong Khapa (1357-1419)



## **Expressing the Homage**

I bow down to my perfect gurus.

## **The Promise to Compose**

The essential meaning of the Victorious Ones' teachings,  
The path praised by all the holy Victors and their Children,  
The gateway of the fortunate ones desiring liberation –  
This I shall try to explain as much as I can.

## **Persuading to Listen**

Those who are not attached to the pleasures of circling [samsara],  
Who strive to make freedom and endowments meaningful,  
Who entrust themselves to the path pleasing the Victorious Ones –  
You fortunate ones: listen with a calm mind.

## **The Purpose of Generating Renunciation**

Without the complete intention definitely to be free from circling,  
There is no way to pacify attachment seeking pleasurable effects in the ocean of circling.  
Also, by craving for cyclic existence, embodied beings are continuously bound.  
Therefore, at the very beginning seek renunciation.

## **How to Generate Renunciation**

Freedom and endowments are difficult to find  
And life has no time to spare.  
By gaining familiarity with this,  
Attraction to the appearances of this life is reversed.

By thinking over and over again  
That actions and their effects are unbetraying,

And repeatedly contemplating the miseries of cyclic existence,  
Attraction to the appearances of future lives is reversed.

### **The Definition of Having Generated Renunciation**

When, by having trained in that way,  
There is no arising, even for a second,  
Of attraction to the perfections of cyclic existence,

And all day and night the intention seeking liberation arises –  
Then the thought of renunciation has been generated.

### **The Purpose of Generating the Mind of Enlightenment**

Even if renunciation has been developed,  
If it is not possessed by the mind of enlightenment  
It does not become the cause of the perfect bliss of unsurpassed enlightenment.  
Therefore the wise generate the supreme mind of enlightenment.

### **How to Generate the Mind of Enlightenment**

Swept away by the current of the four powerful rivers,  
Tied by the tight bonds of karma, so hard to undo,  
Caught in the iron net of self-grasping,  
Completely enveloped by the total darkness of ignorance,

Endlessly reborn in cyclic existence,  
Ceaselessly tormented by the three sufferings –  
Thinking that all mothers are in such a condition,  
Generate the supreme mind of enlightenment.

### **The Definition of Having Generated the Mind of Enlightenment**

In short, If like the mother whose cherished son has fallen into a pit of fire  
And who experiences even one second of his suffering as an unbearable eternity,  
Your reflection on the suffering of all mother sentient beings  
Has made it impossible for you to bear their suffering for even one second

And the wish seeking enlightenment for their sake arises without effort,  
Then you have realized the supreme precious mind of enlightenment.

### **The Reason to Meditate on the Right View**

Without the wisdom realizing ultimate reality,  
Even though you have generated renunciation and the mind of enlightenment  
You cannot cut the root cause of circling.  
Therefore, attempt the method to realize dependent arising.

### **Showing the Right View**

One who sees the cause and effect of all phenomena  
Of both cyclic existence and the state beyond sorrow as forever unbetraying,  
And for whom any object trusted in by the grasping mind has completely disappeared,  
Has at that time entered the path pleasing the Buddhas.

### **The Definition of Not Having Completed the Analysis of the Right View**

If the appearance of dependent relation,  
Which is unbetraying, is accepted separately from emptiness,  
And as long as they are seen as separate,  
Then one has still not realized the Buddha's intent.

### **The Definition of Having Completed the Analysis of Right View**

If [these two realizations] are happening simultaneously without alternation,  
And from merely seeing dependent relation as completely unbetraying  
The definite ascertainment comes that completely destroys  
The way in which all objects are apprehended [as truly existent],  
At that time the analysis of the ultimate view is complete.

### **The Particular Special Quality of the Prasangika View**

Furthermore, appearance eliminates the extreme of existence  
And emptiness eliminates the extreme of non-existence.  
If you realize how emptiness manifests in the manner of cause and effect  
Then you are not captivated by wrong notions holding extreme views.

### **Having Gained Definite Ascertainment, Advice on Pursuing the Practice**

In this way you realize exactly  
The vital points of the three principal aspects of the path.  
Resort to seeking solitude, generate the power of effort,  
And quickly accomplish your final goal, my child.