

Three Principals of the Path

Tsongkhapa · Tsong Khapa

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The Three Principals of the Path

by Tsong Khapa

\ I bow down to the holy lamas.

\ #1.

\ I will explain as well as I can
\ The essential meaning of all the Conqueror's scriptures,
\ The path praised by the excellent Conqueror Children,
\ The port for the fortunate wishing liberation.

\ #2.

\ Whoever are not attached to the pleasures of transient existence,
\ Whoever strive to make leisure and fortune worthwhile,
\ Whoever are inclined to the path pleasing the Conqueror Buddha,
\ Those fortunate ones should listen with a clear mind.

\ #3.

\ Without a complete intention definitely to leave cyclic existence [renunciation]
\ There is no way to stop seeking pleasurable effects in the ocean of existence.
\ Also, craving cyclic existence thoroughly binds the embodied.
\ Therefore, in the beginning, an intention to leave cyclic existence should be sought.

\ #4.ab

\ Leisure and fortune are difficult to find
\ And life has no duration.
\ Through familiarity with this,
\ Emphasis on the appearances of this life is reversed.

\ #4.cd

\ If you think again and again
\ About actions and their inevitable effects
\ And the sufferings of cyclic existence,
\ Emphasis on the appearances
\ Of future lives will be reversed.

\ #5.

\ If, having meditated thus, you do not generate admiration

\ Even for an instant for the prosperity of cyclic existence
\ And if an attitude seeking liberation arises day and night,
\ Then the intention definitely to leave cyclic existence has been generated.

\ #6.
\ Also, if this intention definitely to leave cyclic existence
\ Is not conjoined with generation of a complete aspiration to highest
enlightenment, [Bodhicitta]
\ It does not become a cause of the marvellous bliss of unsurpassed enlightenment.
\ Thus, the intelligent should generate the supreme altruistic aspiration to become
enlightened.

\ #7.
\ [All ordinary beings] are carried by the continuum of the four powerful currents,
\ Are tied with the tight bonds of actions difficult to oppose,
\ Have entered into the iron cage of apprehending self [inherent existence],
\ Are completely beclouded with the thick darkness of ignorance,

\ #8.
\ Are born into cyclic existence limitlessly,
\ And in their births are tortured ceaselessly by the three sufferings.
\ Thinking thus of the condition of mothers who have come to such a state,
\ Generate the supreme altruistic intention to become enlightened.

\ #9.
\ If you do not have the wisdom realizing the way things are,
\ Even though you have developed the thought definitely to leave cyclic existence
\ As well as the altruistic intention, the root of cyclic existence cannot be cut.
\ Therefore work at the means of realizing dependent-arising.

\ #10. [inseparability of samsara and Nirvana]
\ Whoever, seeing the cause and effect of all phenomena
\ Of cyclic existence and nirvana as infallible,
\ Thoroughly destroys the mode of misapprehension of these objects [as inherently
existent]

\ Has entered on a path pleasing to Buddha.
\ 11. [inseparability of the Two Truths]
\ As long as the two, realization of appearances— the infallibility of
dependent-arising—
\ And realization of emptiness—the non-assertion [of inherent existence],
\ Seem to be separate, there is still no realization
\ Of the thought of Shakyamuni Buddha.

\ #12. [realizing the Union of the Two Truths]
\ When [the two realizations exist] simultaneously without alternation
\ And when, from only seeing dependent-arising as infallible,
\ Definite knowledge destroys the mode of apprehension [of the conception of
inherent existence],
\ Then the analysis of the view [of emptiness] is complete.

\ #13. [the Middle Way between existence and non-existence]
\ Further, the extreme of [inherent] existence is excluded [by knowledge of the

nature] of appearances [existing only as nominal designations],
 \ And the extreme of [total] non-existence is excluded [by knowledge of the nature]
 of emptiness [as the absence of inherent existence and not the absence of nominal
 existence].

\ If within emptiness the way of the appearance of cause and effect is known,
 \ You will not be captivated by extreme views.

\ #14. [from a conceptual understanding to a direct realization]
 \ When you have realized thus just as they are
 \ The essentials of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path,
 \ Resort to solitude and generate the power of effort.
 \ Accomplish quickly your final aim, my child.

[THREE MORE TRANSLATIONS:]

\ Reverence to the Holy Gurus!

\ #1.
 \ I will explain as best I can
 \ The essential import of all the Victor's Teachings,
 \ The path praised by all the holy Bodhisattvas.
 \ Best entrance for those fortunate ones who seek freedom.

\ #2.
 \ Listen with clear minds, you lucky people,
 \ Who aspire to the path that pleases Buddhas,
 \ Who work to give meaning to leisure and opportunity,
 \ Who are not addicted to the pleasures of cyclic life.
 \ Lust for existence chains all corporeal beings-

\ #3.
 \ Addiction to the pleasures of the life-cycle
 \ Is only cured by transcendent renunciation (1).
 \ So seek transcendence (1) first of all!

\ #4.
 \ Leisure and opportunity are hard to get,
 \ And there is no time to life; keep thinking on this,
 \ And you will turn off your interest in this life!
 \ Contemplate the inexorability of evolutionary effects
 \ And the sufferings of life-over and over again-
 \ And you will turn off interest in future lives!

\ #5.
 \ By constant meditation, your mind will not entertain
 \ A moment's wish even for the successes of life,
 \ And you will aim for freedom all day and night-
 \ Then you experience transcendent renunciation (1)!

\ #6.
\ Transcendence without the spirit of enlightenment (2)
\ Cannot generate the supreme bliss
\ Of unexcelled enlightenment-therefore,
\ The Bodhisattva conceives the supreme spirit of enlightenment (2).

\ #7-8.
\ Carried away on the currents of four mighty streams,
\ Tightly bound by the near-inescapable chains of evolution,
\ Trapped and imprisoned in the iron cage of self-concern,
\ Totally wrapped in the darkness of misknowledge,
\ Born and born again and again in endless life-cycles,
\ Uninterruptedly tormented by the three miseries-
\ Such is the state of all beings, all just your mothers-
\ From your natural feelings, conceive the highest spirit (2)!

\ #9.
\ Even though you experience transcendent renunciation (1)
\ And cultivate the spirit of enlightenment (2),
\ Without the wisdom from the realization of emptiness (3),
\ You cannot cut off the root of the life-cycle-
\ So, you should strive to understand relativity.

\ #10.
\ Who sees the inexorable causality of all things
\ Both of cyclic life and liberation
\ And destroys any sort of conviction of objectivity-
\ Thereby enters the path pleasing to Victors.

\ #11.
\ Appearance as inevitably relative,
\ And emptiness as free of all assertions-
\ As long as these are understood apart,
\ The Victor's intent is not yet known.

\ #12.
\ But, when they are simultaneous without alternation,
\ The mere sight of inevitable relativity
\ Becomes sure knowledge rid of objective habit-patterns,
\ And the investigation of authentic view is complete.

\ #13.
\ Further, while appearance eliminates absolutism,
\ Emptiness eliminates nihilism,
\ And you know emptiness manifest as cause and effect-
\ Then, you will not be deprived by extremist views.

\ #14.
\ When you realize the essentials
\ Of the three principles of the path,
\ Rely on solitude and powerful efforts,
\ And swiftly achieve the eternal goal, my son!

by Venerable Ribur Rinpoche

\ Prostration to the Venerable Gurus.

\ #1.

\ I will explain to the extent that I am able
\ The essence of all the teachings of the Conqueror,
\ The path praised by the Conqueror's holy children,
\ The entrance for the fortunate ones who desire liberation.

\ #2.

\ Listen with clear minds, you fortunate ones,
\ Who rely on the path that pleases the Conqueror,
\ Strive to make your freedoms and endowments meaningful,
\ And are unattached to the pleasures of cyclic existence.
\ Embodied beings are bound by the longing for existence.

\ #3.

\ Without pure renunciation (1), there are no means to pacify
\ The aspiration for pleasant results in the ocean of existence.
\ Therefore, at the beginning, seek renunciation (1).

\ #4.

\ Counteract clinging to this life by familiarizing your mind
\ With the difficulty of finding the freedoms and endowments
\ And with the fleeting nature of this life.
\ Counteract clinging to future lives by repeatedly contemplating
\ The infallibility of action and result
\ And the sufferings of cyclic existence.

\ #5.

\ By familiarizing yourself in this way,
\ When you do not desire the perfections of samsara for even an instant
\ And continually aspire for liberation, day and night,
\ At that time, you have developed renunciation (1).

\ #6.

\ However, renunciation without pure bodhicitta (2)
\ Cannot result in the perfect happiness
\ Of unsurpassed enlightenment.
\ Therefore, the wise generate the supreme mind of enlightenment (2).

\ #7-8.

\ Swept away by the four torrential rivers,
\ Bound by the tight bonds of actions, so difficult to escape,
\ Caught in the iron net of self-grasping,
\ Totally enveloped by the thick darkness of ignorance,
\ Born and reborn in boundless existence,
\ Incessantly tormented by the three sufferings --

\ Reflecting upon this state of all beings, your mothers,
 \ Generate the supreme mind of enlightenment (2).

\ #9.
 \ Even though you familiarize yourself with renunciation (1)
 \ And the mind of enlightenment (2),
 \ Without the wisdom realizing emptiness (3),
 \ You cannot cut the root of existence.
 \ Therefore, strive to realize dependent arising.

\ #10.
 \ Whosoever sees the infallibility of cause and result
 \ Of all phenomena in samsara and nirvana
 \ And destroys all modes of apprehension
 \ Enters the path that pleases the Buddha.

\ #11.
 \ Appearances are infallible dependent arisings;
 \ Emptiness is free from assertions --
 \ As long as these two are understood as separate,
 \ You have not yet realized the thought of the Conqueror.

\ #12.
 \ When these two realizations are simultaneous and not alternating,
 \ The mere sight of infallible dependent arising
 \ Brings the certainty that destroys all modes of apprehending objects.
 \ Then, your analysis of the profound view is complete.

\ #13.
 \ Furthermore, appearances eliminate the extreme of existence
 \ And emptiness eliminates the extreme of non-existence.
 \ When you understand the way emptiness appears as cause and result,
 \ You will not be carried away by extreme views.

\ #14.
 \ When you have realized the essentials
 \ Of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path,
 \ Rely upon solitude and powerful effort
 \ And swiftly accomplish your eternal goal, my child!

in Zopa - Virtue and Reality

\ Homage to the venerable Lamas.

\ #1.
 \ I will explain as well as I can,
 \ The meaning of the essence of all the Conqueror's scriptures,
 \ The path which is praised by the Conqueror's excellent children,
 \ And the gate for those fortunate ones desiring liberation.

\ #2.
 \ Those not attached to the pleasures of existence,
 \ Who strive to make leisure and opportunity meaningful,
 \ And have faith in the path that pleases the Conqueror,
 \ Those fortunate ones listen with a clear mind.

\ #3.
 \ Without a pure thought to leave [cyclic existence] (1)
 \ There is no way to stop seeking pleasant effects in the ocean of cyclic
 existence;
 \ Also, thirst for existence thoroughly binds the embodied.
 \ Hence, initially, seek renunciation (1).

\ #4.
 \ Leisure and fortune are difficult to find and life is not lasting.
 \ Through familiarizing the mind [with this], reverse emphasis on the appearances
 of this life.
 \ If one thinks again and again of karma's inevitable effects and the sufferings of
 cyclic existence,
 \ Emphasis on future lives is reversed.

\ #5.
 \ After meditating in this way,
 \ If you do not generate even for one moment
 \ Admiration for the marvels of cyclic existence,
 \ And if there is always the thought seeking liberation,
 \ Then at that time one has generated [the intention]
 \ definitely to emerge [from cyclic existence] (1).

\ #6.
 \ Also, if the thought to leave cyclic existence is not conjoined with pure
 bodhicitta (2),
 \ Then it will not be the cause of the marvelous bliss of highest enlightenment.
 \ Hence, the intelligent generate the supreme bodhicitta (2).

\ #7.
 \ Those carried along the continuum of the four fierce and powerful rivers,
 \ Bound by means of tight bonds of actions difficult to reverse,
 \ Who have entered into the iron net of inherently existent self,
 \ And are covered with dark ignorance's great darkness . . .

\ #8.
 \ . . . Are born into limitless cyclic existence,
 \ And in their births are tortured uninterruptedly by the three sufferings.
 \ Contemplating the condition of our mothers in such a state, generate the supreme
 bodhicitta (2).

\ #9.
 \ If one does not have the wisdom realizing the mode of subsistence (3),
 \ Then, even though one has developed bodhicitta (2) and renunciation (1),
 \ One is not able to cut the root of cyclic existence.
 \ Hence, for the sake of that, strive for the method of realizing dependent

arising.

\ #10.
\ If Whoever sees the cause and effect of all phenomena of cyclic existence and
\ nirvana as completely inevitable,
\ And thoroughly destroy the observed object—
\ They enter the path that pleases the Buddha..

\ #11.
\ As long as the two, the understanding of appearances--the infallibility of
dependent arising,

\ And emptiness--the non-assertion [of inherent existence],
\ Appear to be separate, there is still no realization
\ Of the thought of Shakyamuni Buddha

\ #12.
\ When [the two understandings exist] simultaneously without alternation,
\ And when, from just seeing dependent-arising to be infallible,
\ Definite knowledge destroys the mode of apprehending [an inherently existent]
object,

\ Then the analysis of the view is complete.

\ #13.
\ Further, [knowledge of the nature of] appearances [existing only nominally]
excludes the extreme of existence (i.e. much better)
\ And [knowledge of the nature of] emptiness [as the absence of inherent existence]
excludes the extreme of non-existence. (i.e. much better)
\ If [within] emptiness, one knows the mode of the appearance of causes and
effects,

\ One will not be taken over by extreme views.

\ #14.
\ When you have realized just as they are
\ The essentials of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path,
\ Resort to solitude and generate the power of effort.
\ Quickly accomplish your final aim, my son.

in Hundreds

[End]