

Three Principal Aspects of the Path

(Tib: Lam Tso Nam Soom)

- *Lama Tsongkhapa*

I bow down to the Venerable Lamas.

1. I will explain as well as I am able
The essence of all the teachings of the Conqueror,
The path praised by the Conqueror's children,
The entrance for the fortunate who desire liberation.

2. Listen with a clear mind, you fortunate ones
Who are not attached to the joys of cyclic existence,
Who strive to make good use of leisure and opportunity,
And direct your minds to the path pleasing to the Buddha.

3. Without pure renunciation,
There is no way to end attraction to the pleasures of cyclic
existence.
The craving for existence also binds beings.
Thus, from the outset, seek renunciation.

4. Reverse attraction to this life
By reflecting on how leisure and opportunity are difficult
to find and how life is ephemeral and without span.

Reverse attraction to future lives

By repeatedly thinking of the infallibility of karma and its effects, and the miseries of Samsara.

5. Contemplating thus, when you do not, for an instant,
Admire the splendours of cyclic existence,
And remain intent on liberation day and night,
Renunciation is then born in you.
6. Renunciation, however, if not tempered by
a pure mind of Bodhichitta,
Does not bring forth the perfect bliss
Of unsurpassed enlightenment;
Therefore, the wise ones generate the excellent mind of
Bodhichitta.
7. Swept by the current of the four powerful rivers,
Tied by strong bonds of karma, so hard to undo,
Caught in the iron net of self-grasping,
Completely enveloped by the darkness of ignorance,
8. Born and reborn in boundless cyclic existence,
Ceaselessly tormented by the three miseries,
Thinking of your mothers in this condition,

Generate the supreme mind (of Bodhichitta).

9. Although you train in renunciation and the mind of Bodhichitta,
Without wisdom which realizes the ultimate reality,
You cannot cut the root of cyclic existence.
Therefore, strive to understand dependent arising.
10. One who sees the infallible cause and effect
Of all phenomena in Samsara and Nirvana,
And destroys all focuses of apprehension,
Has entered the path which pleases the Buddha.
11. Appearances are infallible dependent arising;
Emptiness is the understanding that is free of assertions.
As long as these two are seen as distinct,
You have not yet realized the intent of the Buddha.
12. When these two realizations are concurrent,
Where the mere sight of infallible dependent origination
Concurrently destroys all modes of grasping through
definite discernment,
At that time the analysis of the (profound) view is perfected.
13. Furthermore, appearances refute the extreme of existence;

Emptiness refutes the extreme of non-existence.

When you understand that emptiness arises in the form of
cause and effect,

You are not captivated by the view of extremes.

14. O my child, once you have realized thus,

The points of the three principal paths,

Seek solitude and cultivate strong determination

And quickly reach the aspired goal.

*Colophon: English translation revised by Geshe Dorji Damdul, April
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