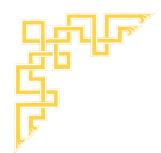
## Atisha Centre Easter Retreat 2017



Lama Atisba's

"A Lamp for the Path

to Enlightenment"



# A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment



by Atisha Dipamkara Shrijnana (982–1054)

#### Introduction

Homage to the Bodhisattva, the youthful Manjushri.

- I. I pay homage with great respect
  To the conquerors of the three times,
  To their teaching and to those who aspire to virtue.
  Urged by the good disciple Jangchub Ö
  I shall illuminate the lamp
  For the path to enlightenment.
- Understand that there are three kinds of persons
   Because of their small, middling and supreme capacities.
   I shall write clearly distinguishing
   Their individual characteristics.
- 3. Know that those who by whatever means Seek for themselves no more Than the pleasures of cyclic existence Are persons of the least capacity.
- 4. Those who seek peace for themselves alone, Turning away from worldly pleasures And avoiding destructive actions Are said to be of middling capacity.
- 5. Those who, through their personal suffering,Truly want to end completelyAll the suffering of othersAre persons of supreme capacity.
- 6. For those excellent living beings, Who desire supreme enlightenment, I shall explain the perfect methods Taught by the spiritual teachers.

# 1. Higher Training in Ethical Conduct 1.1 Refuge

- 7. Facing paintings, statues and so forth
  Of the completely enlightened one,
  Stupa and the excellent teaching,
  Offer flowers, incense—whatever you have.
- 8. With the seven-part offering
  By Samantabhadra,
  With the thought never to turn back
  Till you gain ultimate enlightenment,
- 9. And with strong faith in the Three Jewels, Kneeling with one knee on the ground And your hands pressed together, First of all take refuge three times.

#### 1.2 Aspiring Bodhicitta

10. Next, beginning with an attitude Of love for all living creatures, Consider beings, excluding none, Suffering in the three bad rebirths, Suffering birth, death and so forth.

- II. Then, since you want to free these beings From the suffering of pain, From suffering and the cause of suffering, Arouse immutably the resolve To attain enlightenment.
- 12. The qualities of developing Such an aspiration are Fully explained by Maitreya In the Array of Trunks Sutra.
- 13. Having learned about the infinite benefits Of the intention to gain full enlightenment By reading this sutra or listening to a teacher, Arouse it repeatedly to make it steadfast.

I4. The Sutra Requested by ViradattaFully explains the merit therein.At this point, in summary,I will cite just three verses.

15. If it possessed physical form, The merit of the mind of enlightenment Would completely fill the whole of space And exceed even that.

If someone were to fill with jewelsAs many buddha fields as there are grainsOf sand in the GangesTo offer to the Protector of the World,

17. This would be surpassed byThe gift of folding one's handsAnd inclining one's mind to enlightenment,For such is limitless.

18. Having developed the aspiration for enlightenment,Constantly enhance it through concerted effort.To remember it in this and also in other lives,Keep the precepts properly as explained.

19. Without the vow of the engaged bodhicitta,Perfect aspiration will not grow.Make effort definitely to take it,Since you want the wish for enlightenment to grow.

#### 1.3 Individual Liberation Vows

20. Those who maintain any of the seven kinds Of individual liberation vow Have the ideal [prerequisite] for The bodhisattva vow, not others.

21. The Tathagata spoke of seven kinds
Of individual liberation vow.
The best of these is glorious pure conduct,
Said to be the vow of a fully ordained person.

#### 1.4 The Bodhisattva Vows

- 22. According to the ritual described in The chapter on discipline in the Bodhisattva Stages, Take the vow from a good And well-qualified spiritual teacher.
- 23. Understand that a good spiritual teacher Is one skilled in the vow ceremony, Who lives by the vow and has The patience and compassion to bestow it.
- 24. However, in case you try but cannot Find such a spiritual teacher, I shall explain another Correct procedure for taking the vow.
- 25. I shall write here very clearly, as explained In the Ornament of Manjushri's Buddha Land Sutra, How, long ago, when Manjushri was Ambaraja, He aroused the intention to become enlightened.
- 26. "In the presence of the protectors, I arouse the intention to gain full enlightenment. I invite all beings as my guests
  And shall free them from cyclic existence.
- 27. "From this moment onwards
  Until I attain enlightenment,
  I shall not harbour harmful thoughts,
  Anger, avarice or envy.
- 28. "I shall cultivate pure conduct, Give up wrong-doing and desire And with joy in the vow of ethical conduct Train myself to follow the buddhas.
- 29. "I shall not be eager to reach Enlightenment in the quickest way, But shall stay behind till the very end, For the sake of a single being.

30. "I shall purify limitless Inconceivable lands And remain in the ten directions For all those who call my name.

3I. "I shall purify all my physical And verbal karma. My mental karma, too, I shall purify And do nothing that is non-virtuous."

32. When those observing the vow
Of engaging bodhicitta have trained well
In the three forms of ethics, their respect
For these three trainings of ethical conduct grows,
Which causes purity of body, speech and mind.

33. Therefore, through effort in the vow made by Bodhisattvas for pure, full enlightenment, The collections for complete enlightenment Will be thoroughly accomplished.

## 2 Higher Training in Concentration 2.1 Extra Perception

34. All buddhas say the cause for the completion Of the collections, whose nature is Merit and exalted wisdom, Is the development of extra perception.

35. Just as a bird with undeveloped Wings cannot fly in the sky, Those without the power of extra perception Cannot work for the good of living beings.

36. The merit gained in a single day
By one who possesses extra perception
Cannot be gained even in a hundred lifetimes
By one without such extra perception.

37. Those who want swiftly to complete The collections for full enlightenment Will accomplish extra perception Through effort, not through laziness.

#### 2.2 Calm Abiding

38. Without the attainment of calm abiding, Extra perception will not occur.
Therefore make repeated effort
To accomplish calm abiding.

39. While the conditions for calm abiding Are incomplete, meditative stabilisation Will not be accomplished, even if one meditates Strenuously for thousands of years.

# 3 Higher Training in Wisdom 3.1 Method and Wisdom 3.1.1 Perfection of Wisdom

40. Thus maintaining well the conditions mentioned In the Collection for Meditative Stabilisation Chapter, Place the mind on any one Virtuous focal object.

41. When the practitioner has gained calm abiding, Extra perception will also be gained, But without practice of the perfection of wisdom, The obstructions will not come to an end.

### 3.1.2 Union of Method and Wisdom

42. Thus, to eliminate all obstructions
To liberation and omniscience,
The practitioner should continually cultivate
The perfection of wisdom with skilful means.

43. Wisdom without skilful means
And skilful means, too, without wisdom
Are referred to as bondage.
Therefore do not give up either.

44. To eliminate doubts concerning
What is called wisdom and what skilful means,
I shall make clear the difference
Between skilful means and wisdom.

45. Apart from the perfection of wisdom, All virtuous practices such as
The perfection of generosity are described As skilful means by the Victorious Ones.

46. Whoever, under the influence of familiarity With skilful means, cultivates wisdom Will quickly attain enlightenment—
Not just by meditating on selflessness.

#### 3.1.3 Four Great Proofs of Emptiness

47. Understanding emptiness of inherent existence Through realising that the aggregates, constituents And sources are not produced Is described as wisdom.

48. Something existent cannot be produced, Nor something non-existent, like a sky flower. These errors are both absurd and thus Both of the two will not occur either.

49. A thing is not produced from itself, Nor from another, also not from both, Nor causelessly either, thus it does not Exist inherently by way of its own entity.

50. Moreover, when all phenomena are examined As to whether they are one or many, They are not seen to exist by way of their own entity, And thus are ascertained as not inherently existent.

51. The reasoning of the Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness, The Treatise on the Middle Way and so forth Explain that the nature of all things Is established as emptiness.

#### 3.1.4 Meditation

52. Since there are a great many passages, I have not cited them here, But have explained just their conclusions For the purpose of meditation.

53. Thus, whatever is meditation
On selflessness, in that it does not observe
An inherent nature in phenomena,
Is the cultivation of wisdom.

54. Just as wisdom does not see
An inherent nature in phenomena,
Having analysed wisdom itself by reasoning,
Non-conceptually meditate on that.

55. The nature of this worldly existence, Which has come from conceptualisation, Is conceptuality. Thus the elimination of Conceptuality is the highest state of nirvana.

#### 3.1.5 Proof from Scripture

56. The great ignorance of conceptuality Makes us fall into the ocean of cyclic existence. Resting in non-conceptual stabilisation, Space-like non-conceptuality manifests clearly.

57. When bodhisattvas non-conceptually contemplate This excellent teaching, they will transcend Conceptuality, so hard to overcome, And eventually reach the non-conceptual state.

### 3.1.6 Cultivation of Special Insight

58. Having ascertained through scripture And through reasoning that phenomena Are not produced nor inherently existent, Meditate without conceptuality.

### 3.1.7 Stages of the Path

59. Having thus meditated on suchness, Eventually, after reaching "heat" and so forth, The "very joyful" and the others are attained And, before long, the enlightened state of buddhahood.

#### 4. Tantric Vehicle

60. If you wish to create with ease
The collections for enlightenment
Through activities of pacification,
Increase and so forth, gained by the power of mantra,

61. And also through the force of the eight
And other great attainments like the "good pot"—
If you want to practise secret mantra,
As explained in the action and performance tantras,

#### 4.1 Empowerment

62. Then, to receive the preceptor initiation, You must please an excellent spiritual teacher Through serving with respect, make offerings, As well as following his advice.

63. Through the full bestowing of the preceptor initiation, By a spiritual teacher who is pleased, You are purified of all wrong-doing And become fit to gain powerful attainments.

#### 4.2 Misunderstandings of Tantra

64. Because the Great Tantra of the Primordial Buddha Forbids it emphatically,
Those observing pure conduct should not
Take the secret and wisdom initiations.

#### 4.3 Prohibited Initiations

65. If those observing the ascetic practice of pure conduct Were to hold these initiations,
Their vow of asceticism would be impaired
Through doing that which is proscribed.

66. This creates transgressions that are a defeat For those observing discipline. Since they are certain to fall to a bad rebirth, They will never gain accomplishments.

67. There is no fault if one who has received The preceptor initiation and has knowledge Of suchness listens to or explains the tantras And performs fire pujas, Or makes offering to deities and so forth.

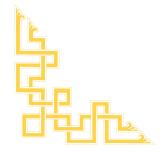
68. I, the Elder Dipamkarashri, having seen it Explained in sutra and in other teachings, Have made this concise explanation At the request of Jangchub Ö.

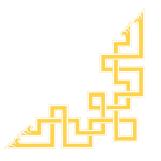
#### **COLOPHON**

This concludes A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment, by the Acharya Dipamkara Shrijnana. It was translated, revised and finalised by the eminent Indian abbot himself and by the great reviser, translator and fully ordained monk Geway Lodrö. This teaching was written in the temple of Thöling in Zhang Zhung. Translated by Ruth Sonam, Dharamsala, January 1997.

The verse were taken from "Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment" by His Holiness Dalai Lama / Produced by the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, Boston, Massachusetts for Thubten Dhargye Ling Archive, Long Beach, California www.tdling.com









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