

## THE THREE PRINCIPAL ASPECTS OF THE PATH

Je Tsongkhapa

Tibetan title: *lam gyi gtso bo rnam pa gsum*

Homage to the most venerable teachers!

1  
I shall explain here to the best of my ability:  
The essential points of all the scriptures of the Conqueror;  
The path acclaimed by all excellent bodhisattvas;  
The gateway for the fortunate ones aspiring for liberation.

2  
Those who are not attached to the joys of cyclic existence,  
Who strive to make meaningful this life of leisure and opportunity,  
And who place their trust in the path that pleases the Conquerors -  
O fortunate ones, listen with an open heart.

3  
Without pure renunciation there is no means to pacify  
The yearning for the joys and fruits of samsaric ocean;  
And as craving for existence chain us thoroughly,  
At first search for a true renunciation.

4  
By cultivating in mind that this human life is so hard to find  
Yet has no time to spare, preoccupations with this life will cease;  
By contemplating repeatedly the truth of karma and samsaric suffering,  
Preoccupations with next life will come to cease.

5  
As you habituate in this way and when not even an instant  
Of admiration arises for the prosperities of cyclic existence,  
And when the thought aspiring for liberation arises day and night,  
At this point true renunciation has arisen.

6  
Such renunciation too if it is not sustained  
By pure awakening mind it will not become a cause  
Of the perfect bliss of unexcelled enlightenment;  
Therefore O intelligent ones, generate the excellent awakening mind.

7  
They're being swept away constantly by four powerful rivers;  
They're bound tightly with fetters of karma most difficult to escape;  
They're trapped inside the iron mesh of self-grasping;  
They're enveloped from everywhere by thick mists of ignorance;

8  
They take birth within cyclic existence that has no end,  
Where they're endlessly tormented by the three sufferings.  
By reflecting on all your mothers who suffer such conditions,  
Please generate the supreme awakening mind.

9  
If you do not have the wisdom realising the ultimate nature,  
Even if you gain familiarity with renunciation and awakening mind,  
You will not be able to cut the root of samsaric existence;  
So strive in the means of realizing dependent origination.

10  
When with respect to all phenomena of samsara and nirvana,  
You see that cause and effects never deceive their laws,  
And when you have dismantled the focus of objectification,  
At that point you have entered the path that pleases the Buddhas.

11  
So long as the two understandings - of appearance,  
Which is undeceiving dependent origination,  
And emptiness devoid of all theses - remain separate,  
So long you have not realized the intent of the Sage.

This advice was given by the monk Lobsang Drakpai Pal to Ngawang Drakpa, a leading person of Tsakho region.

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12  
However at some point when, without alternation but at once,  
The instant you see that dependent origination is undeceiving,  
If the entire object of grasping at certitude is dismantled,  
At that point your analysis of the view has culminated.

13  
Furthermore when appearance dispels the extreme of existence,  
And when emptiness dispels the extreme of non-existence,  
And if you understand how emptiness arises as cause and effect,  
You will never be captivated by views grasping at extremes.

14  
Thus when you have understood as they are  
The essentials of the three principal aspects of the path,  
O son, seek solitude and by enhancing the power of perseverance,  
Swiftly accomplish your ultimate aspiration.