

Prescriptions and Proscriptions: Their Mode of Abiding

Om Swasti!

I respectfully pay homage to all the lamas who
Have mastery over the objects of knowledge,
Embody compassion, are friends to all migrators, and
Show unmistakably what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned.

For you fortunate ones with sincere interest in the Dharma
And an open door of intelligence,
I share this advice on what is to be practiced and what is not,
In accordance with causality's mode of abiding.

This excellent body-support, with its eight pleasures and ten endowments,
Enables one to attain unsurpassable enlightenment:
Contemplate the allegories and so forth¹ of how difficult
it is to obtain and
Henceforth engage in the essence of the Teaching.

All appearing-existing phenomena
Are of a moment-by-moment disintegrating nature;
Know oneself and all others to be impermanent
And so strive in the changeless and sublime Dharma.

All these appearing phenomena, which bring happiness and suffering,
Arise from the basic character, inexorable karmic causality;
With a fully-pure wisdom eye,
Be unmistakable with regard to acceptance and rejection.

Here in this state of cycling through the three realms,
No one high or low, rich or poor, educated or uneducated
Leaves the land of suffering;
Strive in the uncontaminated and sublime Dharma.

¹ There are four ways in which the difficulty of obtaining a precious human life is taught: 1) *bey*, *allegory*, such as 'the unlikelihood of a turtle poking its head through a floating yoke'; 2) *gyu*, *cause*, how virtue and non-virtue lead to various births; 3) *trang*, *enumeration*, examples of comparative numbers of beings in the various realms, such as 'animals exist in the great oceans as numerously as the grains fermented to produce prime chang'; and 4) *ngo-wo*, *entity*, direct description of what precious human life entails, the eight pleasures and ten endowments. These can all be found in the texts of the tradition, for example in chapter three of *Engaging by Stages in the Teaching of the Buddha* by Phagmodrupa (Otter Verlag, 2008) and chapter two of the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* by Gampopa (Snow Lion, 1998).

Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are the
Changeless, permanent places of refuge;
You who desire emancipation from the abyss of suffering,
Take refuge in them from the bottom of your heart.

Moral conduct is the operative cause of attaining
Higher realms and definite goodness;
Make it a priority to engage in the vinaya-sphere,²
Abandoning the ten non-virtuous actions.

All one's own happiness arises from others;
Desiring others benefit is the cause of one's own happiness –
Authentically practice the four immeasurables of
Love, compassion, and the rest.

The sole cause of obtaining buddhahood
And of any of the peace and happiness of samsara and nirvana
Is bodhicitta;
Make every effort to generate it in your mindstream.

There is bodhicitta of aspiration and engagement,
And unsurpassable, ultimate bodhicitta –
Riding well the steed of perseverance,
Reach the end of this Path.

Just like sesame oil in sesame seeds,
The essence of sugata-hood is the virtue-element,
Which pervades throughout all sentient beings in the six realms,
Its mode of abiding free of reduction or augmentation.

For this reason, one's own mind is in fact Buddha,
Although yet obscured by adventitious defilement;
Every heap of Dharma that the Buddha taught,
He taught in order to dispel this defilement.

There are many methods free of difficulty on the
Path of ripening and liberation, and so those who
Desire to attain buddhahood swiftly
Should follow this path of mantra.

² 'To engage in the vinaya sphere' is to take one of the three vinaya vows and to keep that vow's precepts: 1) *gey-nyen*, *layperson*, with five precepts; 2) *gey-tshul*, *novice ordination*, with ten precepts; and 3) *gey-long*, *full ordination*, with many precepts. Details about the vinaya vows can be found in chapter seven of *Engaging by Stages*.

With undistracted recollection of the divine form,
The embodiment of bodhicitta,
The clear, pure, and stable generation stage meets
The consummate nature face-to-face.

With the completion stages
Of profound, subtle bindu and signlessness,
Purify all remaining obscurations, without exception,
Into the blissful sky of dharmadhatu.

To bring all migrators onto the path of the supreme vehicle
Vivid embodiments of the enlightened activities
Of all the buddhas of the three times
Arise in the form of root and lineage lamas.

Follow a lama who embodies scripture and realization,
Has completely uprooted entanglement in self-benefit,
Dispels others' suffering with compassion,
And leads them on the path with great wisdom.

Attachment, aversion, and ignorance,
And the non-virtue born from these,
Give rise to the suffering of samsara in general
And that of the three lower realms in particular.

Causes and conditions bring these up,
But they are permitted nowhere in the vows of
Individual liberation, bodhicitta, or secret mantra,
And so every proscription is always proscribed.

Non-attachment, non-aversion, and non-ignorance,
And the virtue born from these,
Give rise to all the happiness there is
In samsara and nirvana.

Every prescription in the entirely non-contradictory vows of
Individual liberation, bodhicitta, and secret mantra is always prescribed;
The reality of virtue and non-virtue is that
One cannot be where the other one is.

All the various appearances that there are
Are merely a manifestation of the mind's play;
The mind itself, birthless *chak* (wisdom of emptiness);

Samsara-nirvana, one taste *gya* (seal of emptiness).³

Both appearances and mind are subject to
Infallible causality; omniscience as well
Depends on causes and follows from them; and so
Mahamudra and discipline share the same key point.

All phenomena are interdependently arisen,
Interdependent arising is emptiness;
The character and disposition of the way of being,
Devoid of removing or adding, is luminosity-emptiness itself.

When emptiness is realized,
Causality stands out distinctly in that emptiness;
Samsara-nirvana nature, just as it is, and
Causes and results, as many as there are, are both clearly known.⁴

Teachings such as these on adopting and abandoning
Are the central principle of the
Perfect Buddha's three dharma-wheels
And the heart of all sutra and mantra.

Demarcation between what is to be practiced and what is not
Is what differentiates samsara and nirvana;
This is the best method with which to remedy mistakes and faults,
And is the stairway to the higher realms and liberation.

So amazing, wonderful, and great
Are these teachings of Lord Shakyamuni;
You with the good fortune to be practitioners of the Dharma:
Exert yourselves in the practice of these points!

You intelligent ones who practice in this way
Are great beings who maintain the Teaching,
Truly important leaders of beings, and
Real followers of the Lion of the Shakyas.

³ *chak* and *gya* are the syllables of the word for 'mudra' in Tibetan, *chak-gya* – as in 'mahamudra', *chak-gya-chen-po*.

⁴ This verse refers to the two-fold primordial wisdom of buddhahood: "the primordial wisdom of knowing the dharma-nature (dharmata, phenomenal nature), as it actually is"; and "the primordial wisdom of knowing dharma-instances (dharmins, phenomena) in all their complexity".

Any mistakes I have made in this composition,
I confess before the buddhas and bodhisattvas;
However, know that I have not sullied it with my own inventions,
I have written it by relying on a pure lineage of teachings.

By whatever virtue this represents,
May all migrators, our mothers,
Purify the two obscurations, complete the two accumulations,
And reach the non-abiding state.

Inspired and amazed by having seen in an unmistakable manner just a few of the main points of the teachings of the three trainings having to do with prescriptions and proscriptions in the precious Teaching comprised of the scripture and realization of the Conquerors, I, Könchog Gyaltsen, the vagabond called Khenchen, wrote what came to mind on July 4th, 2008 at Drigung Drenshe Ling in Germany. May virtue and auspiciousness reach to every direction!

Just as the softly falling snowflakes of autumn become the blizzards of winter, this translation, made by Khenchen Könchog Gyaltsen and Terence Barrett in November 2008 in Madison, Wisconsin, based in part on a translation of an earlier version of the text by Achim Bayer, is but a prelude to the full accumulation of the original poem's power; when many faithful English-speaking practitioners receive this teaching, contemplate its meaning, and put it into practice, the virtue-avalanche will be unstoppable!

