



The Three Principal Aspects of the Path

by Je Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa

I bow down to my perfect gurus.

1.

The essential meaning of the Buddha's teachings,
The path praised by the holy victors and their children,
The gateway of the fortunate ones desiring liberation—
This I shall try to explain as much as I can.

2.

Those who are not attached to the pleasures of saṃsāra,
Who strive to make their life meaningful,
Who entrust themselves to the path pleasing to the victorious ones,
You, fortunate ones, listen with a clear and pure mind.

3.

Without the complete intention to be definitely free from saṃsāra,
There is no way to pacify attachment to pleasure in the ocean of cyclic existence.
By craving cyclic existence, beings are continuously bound.
Therefore, at the very beginning, seek renunciation.

4.

Freedoms and advantages are difficult to find, and there's no time to waste—
By gaining familiarity with this, attraction to the appearances of this life is diminished.
Reflect again and again that actions and their effects are inevitable,
By contemplating repeatedly the suffering of saṃsāra, attraction to the appearances of future lives is diminished.

5.

When, by having trained yourself in this way,
You don't desire the perfections of saṃsāric, cyclic existence even for a second,
And all day and night the intention seeking liberation arises,
At that time, you have developed renunciation.

6.

However, renunciation without genuine bodhicitta,
Does not become the cause of the perfect happiness of unsurpassed enlightenment.
Therefore, the wise generate the supreme mind of bodhicitta.

7.

Swept away by the current of the four, powerful rivers,
Bound by the tight bonds of karma so difficult to escape,
Caught in the iron net of self-grasping,
Beings are completely enveloped by the thick darkness of ignorance.

8.

Endlessly reborn in cyclic existence,
Continuously tormented by the three sufferings,
Thinking that all your mothers are in such a condition—
Generate the supreme mind of enlightenment.

9.

Without the wisdom realizing ultimate reality,
Even though you have generated renunciation and the mind of enlightenment,
You cannot cut the root cause of existence.
Therefore, train in the method to realize dependent arising.

10.

One who sees the infallibility of cause and effect
Of all phenomena in cyclic existence and enlightenment,
And for whom trust in any object of the grasping mind has completely disappeared,
Has, at that time, entered the path pleasing to the buddhas.

11.

Appearances are infallible dependent arisings,
Emptiness is free from asserting anything—
As long as these two are understood as separate,
You have not yet realized the Buddha's intent.

12.

When these two realizations happen simultaneously—not alternately,
And from merely seeing dependent arising as completely infallible,
A certainty is born that destroys all modes of apprehending objects as truly existent,
At that time, the analysis of the ultimate view is complete.

13.

Appearance eliminates the extreme of existence,
Emptiness eliminates the extreme of non-existence.
If you realize the way emptiness manifests as cause and effect,
Then you are not captivated by wrong notions of extreme views.

14.

When you have realized the point of these three principal aspects of the path—just as they are,
Rely on solitude,
Generate the power of diligent effort,
And quickly accomplish your final goal, my child.

This was taught to Tsako Önpö Ngawang Drakpa by the learned and fully-ordained monk, the glorious Lobzang Drakpa