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Translated by Sandup Tsering

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We will do a few minutes of breathing meditation, ensuring that we keep our mental focus on the incoming and outgoing breath. The reason we are studying this lamrim text is because we all want happiness in this lifetime and in future lives. So, reinforce that this is our reason for studying the Dharma. We should recognise that merely studying is not enough to achieve our goal of happiness; we must also integrate our learning into our practice by relating what we learn to our thoughts and deeds.

In terms of our daily practice, it would of course be wonderful if we have a detailed understanding of the lamrim text, the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path* by Lama Tsongkhapa. However, if you don't have that text, you must at least have an understanding of its essential points so that you can contemplate and meditate on them daily. In this way, we can deepen and further our knowledge and gain familiarity with the whole lamrim.

The main thing we have covered thus far is the source of this lineage of transmission which can be traced back to the Lord Buddha. All the Buddha's teachings can be put into two stages of the path, namely the stages of the path of vast deeds and the stages of the path of profound view. From the Lord Buddha, the lineage of the path of vastness was transmitted to Maitreya and then to Asanga. Whereas the path of profundity was transmitted to Manjushri and then to Nagarjuna. From Maitreya and Nagarjuna, the two lineages were transmitted successively through an unbroken line of masters to Atisha who received both lineages.

Atisha logically arranged all the Buddha's teachings into three stages of the path to enlightenment to accord with the mental capacity of three types of person: the person of small, middling and great mental scope. He taught the great stages of the path to the person of great mental scope, the middling stage of the path to the middling person and the small stages of the path to the person of small mental scope, precisely catering to the predisposition, mental aptitude and needs of each of the three types of person. So, Atisha laid out all the Buddha's teachings into three categories to suit the three mental capacities of the three types of people. Practically this implies the stages of the path of the three persons or in Tibetan '*kyebu sum-ki lamrim*. The wording of the three stages of the path or lamrim evolved later over the course of the development of the three Kadampa lineages of the scripture, lamrim and pith instruction. Je Tsongkhapa received all three Kadampa lineages from his teachers.

To gain familiarity with the lamrim teaching we must study as we are doing now. In the learning process, we must also try to close the book and mentally review and go through what we learn. We should try to review whether we remember how the lineage has been transmitted to Tsongkhapa from the Buddha. In this way, we can become familiar with the lamrim teachings. It is best if we can remember and reflect on the whole outline of the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path* by Tsongkhapa; going through it that way would be wonderful.

If not, focussing on and familiarising ourselves with all the essential points will do.

Although our contemplation does not include detailed topics of the lamrim, it does include all the essential points. Therefore, we can say that we still meditate on the entire lamrim or the stages of the path. For example, if you are suffering from a cold, you could have symptoms such as a headache, sore throat and fever. But to remedy the cold, you can take one type of tablet that can cure all the symptoms; it is not necessary to take different tablets to get rid of each symptom. Likewise, if we meditate on the essential points, then even if it lacks detail, it can have the same effect in terms of gaining realisations and countering mental afflictions.

Je Tsongkhapa combined the meaning of the entire stages of the path into *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*: renunciation, bodhicitta and the wisdom of emptiness. He undertook a retreat in solitude in a place called Reting in Tibet. At that time, he had a holy object of an image of Atisha which he fervently prayed to for a long time. Due to his prayers, he had a clear vision of the entire lineage masters of the stages of the path, beginning with the Lord Buddha down to his own gurus; in particular, he saw Jowo Atisha, Dromtonpa, Potowa, and Sharawa. He had this vision for a month and received many teachings and instructions from these masters. Eventually, the three Kadampa masters, including Potowa, absorbed into Atisha. Atisha then placed his hands on Tsongkhapa's head and said, 'You must do great service for the teaching. I will help you in working for the benefit of living beings and achieving enlightenment.'

Later, some of Tsongkhapa's students requested that he compose a commentary to Atisha's text, *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, and upon this request, Tsongkhapa wrote the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. When Tsongkhapa was ready to compose the *Great Treatise*, Manjushri appeared and half-jokingly said to Tsongkhapa, as recorded in the *Quick Path*, 'I taught renunciation, the spirit of enlightenment, and right view leading toward the path; aren't they sufficient?' Tsongkhapa replied, 'True, these three are the taproots, but in addition to these, I supplemented them with scriptures like the *Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment*, and so forth. Then I applied those to the stages of the path for the three levels: small, middling, and advanced practitioners.' There were many such inconceivable, secret events.

After that, Tsongkhapa wrote the *Small Treatise on the Stages of the Path*, known as *The Middling Lamrim Treatise* or *Lamrim Ding* in Tibetan. In this, he put aside a detailed citation of quotations, objections of outside views and establishment of own views as presented in the *Great Treatise*.

The *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* says, 'Because it seems only barely possible to know how to put all these theories into practice, sustaining the practice might weaken.' Realising this, the all-knowing fourth Panchen Lama Lobsang Chokyi Gyaltsen composed *Practical Guide to the Stages of Enlightenment, the Easy Path*. Then the Lord all-knowing Rgyal dbang (the fifth Dalai Lama Lobsang Gyatso) composed the *Oral Instruction of Manjushri*. These works are very suitable, as they are neither too long nor too short, and they are supported by scriptural quotations and logic.

All the lamrim texts written by his predecessor and by His Holiness the fifth Dalai Lama are the right ones, and if you put those into practise you don't need to rely on any other texts. However, the author of this text, the fifth Panchen Lama Lobsang Yeshe had a number of reasons for composing *The*

Quick Path to Omniscience: a Practical Guide for the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment.

The text indicates that some people can meditate on their own and this is enough; however, others have urged that it is necessary to write a book such as this one. 'While I have very little merit and very little knowledge, a basic foundation for a good understanding of the stages of the path to enlightenment is more important than searching for a very advanced understanding of the path and the stages. To write about the numbers of the path, the sequence of the path, the identities of the paths, I am going to write based on whatever knowledge I have. From *The Great and Concise Stages of the Path*, you should know the greatness of the composer, the greatness of the teaching, and how the Dharma teachings are explained.'

This is how His Holiness the fifth Panchen Lama Lobsang Yeshe ended up composing the *Quick Path to Omniscience*, which he taught to a great many students. As he aged, he started to lose his eyesight, to the point that for him to be able to read his attendant had to write the script in a very large print. At that time the oral transmission of this lamrim hadn't taken place, which was a concern. According to Tibetan tradition, lamas will not give a teaching or any transmission unless requested. So, the main reason the transmission had not taken place was because no-one had requested it.

In the meantime, there was a yogi named Lobsang Namgyal who came across this text and was amazed by it. Realising how old the fifth Panchen Lama Lobsang Yeshe was, Lobsang Namgyal requested him to pass on an oral transmission. Since the request came from a yogi who outwardly looked more like a vagabond and who certainly had no sign of glamour or wealth and prestige, the attendants of the Panchen Lama simply ignored the request. Also, as the Panchen Lama was very old and had poor eyesight, the attendant thought it was not a good idea. To give an oral transmission of such a voluminous text would take several days; so, it did not happen at that time. The yogi made this request three times and was rejected by the attendant each time. After the third request, the yogi was quite disappointed, so he said to the attendant, 'I am not requesting this from you but from the Panchen Rinpoche, so can you at least make sure that you pass my request on to the Panchen Rinpoche?'

When the yogi's request reached the Panchen Rinpoche, he was so delighted that he agreed to give the oral transmission of the text. Whilst giving the oral transmission the Panchen Lama had no issues with his eyesight and was able to read every single word of the whole text - which is what is required in passing on an oral transmission. So, everything went well.

It is by the kindness and gratitude of the yogi-saint Lobsang Namgyal that we now have the unbroken transmission of this text.

Like many of you, I also attended His Holiness the Dalai Lama's recent oral transmission of all the *Eighteen Commentaries of the Lamrim*. Therefore, I can say that I have received this transmission from His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

In the section where the author begins his actual presentation, he mentions that to understand the greatness of the composer and the teaching or the Dharma, and how to listen and teach the Dharma we should refer to the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path*.

Atisha wrote the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, so the greatness of the teaching or Dharma refers to Atisha's text, *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. In the lamrim, we also find the four special qualities of the Dharma.

Four special qualities of the Dharma

1. The first of the four special qualities of the Dharma or teaching is that all the Buddha's teachings are non-contradictory. By understanding *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* you will understand that all Buddha's teachings are non-contradictory. This is in the sense that all the Buddha's teachings - whether they are sutras or tantras - are taught to many different audiences and listeners, so if we have a good understanding of and rely on these lamrim texts, we won't find any contradictions.

2. The second special quality is understanding that all the Buddha's teachings are instructions for practise. All the Buddha's teachings are, without exception, instructions to be applied and put into practise. There is not a word that is not meant for or not relevant to apply in your practice. This is another special quality of the text that you will understand; all the teachings of the Buddha are personal instructions.

3. Thirdly, easily finding the Buddha's thoughts and intentions through understanding the lamrim teaching. If you understand and rely on the lamrim text, one of the special qualities is easily understanding the thoughts and intentions of the Buddha.

4. The fourth special quality is that the Dharma automatically prevents great faults. This is to say, by following the lamrim text we can easily or automatically eliminate all the mental afflictions, such as desire, anger, jealousy and so forth.

You will find that Tsongkhapa's *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path* covers these four special, specific qualities of Dharma in greater detail.

The next part is about how to listen to and teach the Dharma, which we will go over next time.

In Tsongkhapa's *Great Treatise*, there is one line that says, 'The author of that text is also the author of this text'. Some scholars interpret the meaning of 'the author of that text' as referring to Atisha's text, *The Lamp for the Path*, which was written earlier, and that 'this text' is Tsongkhapa's, the *Great Treatise*. They say that Atisha and Tsongkhapa are of the same mental continuum and are the same person. However, the author of this text, the Panchen Lama, said that it is impossible that Tsongkhapa would make such a bold statement about being of the same continuum as Atisha because Tsongkhapa was a great practitioner of humbleness.

Please think about this line in the *Great Treatise*, 'The author of that text is the author of this text' as well.

We will leave it here for tonight. Thank you.

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Edited Version

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