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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

Published by

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## Summary

Lamrim is a Tibetan textual form for presenting the stages in the complete path to enlightenment as taught by Buddha. In Tibetan Buddhist history there have been many different versions of lamrim, presented by different teachers of the Nyingma, Kagyu and Gelug schools. However, all versions of the lamrim are elaborations of Atisa's 11th-century root text "A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment. (Bodhipathapradīpa). - Wikipedia

This article was first published in 1982 as part of a Schools Commission Project in Victoria Australia to introduce a course for teaching Buddhism in Victorian secondary schools. This section included a brief introduction to Tibetan Buddhism and the Chenrezig Institute in Queensland.

### The Main Points of the Graded Path to Enlightenment.

(Tibetan; Lam. gyi. rim. ndu. tsam. du. bStanpa).

The graded course has two stages of practice. The need is to obtain an excellent Guru (teacher), not just any teacher will do. He must be able to know the nature of the path, the specifics of the path and the graded order of the stages of the path. If he leaves out any of the important stages or adds any unnecessary stages, his teachings will not be effective. For this reason the Tibetans place great trust in their Gurus. Oral teachings show the way to the disciple along the graded path, but all have been derived from the great spiritual text. The significance of the oral explanations is that they quickly bring the Chela (pupil) to a more certain understanding of meaning of text which would be difficult to understand by themselves.

The great stress placed on finding a living teacher becomes very important and the disciples of Tibetan teachers will always do what their Gurus orders. The exercises vary, depending on the nature of the person.

"A man of small scope" must strive to produce a type of mind that makes merit to benefit his future re-births. This is done by turning his mind away from taking interest only in his life. He is told to meditate on how the causes of being reborn in the different realms depend on the white karma accumulated from virtuous actions and the black karma accumulated from non-virtuous actions.

For "a man of medium scope", the mind is cultivated to take interest in the Nirvana by turning the mind away from taking interest in the luring of attractions of the circle of Samsara. Samsara is rebirth and illusion.

For the "man of great scope", the mind is turned completely away from all selfish thoughts which are only concerned with his own welfare and which ignore trying to make others happy. He works to help others in their suffering and develops his mind to secure a stable state of mind by which he can aspire

to obtain Buddhahood. This is done by developing three good habits.

- 1 MAITRA This is the type of love with which you wish all those who are happy to remain so.
2. KARUNA This is the type of compassion-kindness with which you wish all those who are suffering to become liberated from it.
3. BODHICITTA This is the enlightened attitude of compassion with which you assume the responsibility to work to attain the Buddhahood yourself in order to be able to liberate all living creatures from their sufferings and ensure their happiness.

These habits can only come about when you realise that just as you yourself feel good when you are happy and feel terrible when you are suffering, so do all living beings.

The fundamental error of seeking ego-gratification in the mere calling up of knowledge is wrong because the aim of seeking ego-security does not develop mind. In order to develop the mind successfully, without having to force it or fake it, it is not enough just to have intellectual understanding of teachings. You have to have the meditation done beforehand to confirm your motivation, and the worthiness of attaining the goal. This type of preliminary meditation is called examination meditation. This is done prior to any practice. The cleaning of the black karmic consequences of previously committed non-virtuous actions is done through repeated invocation of the four opponent powers. The three jewels of refuge; the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (the monastic order; are actually the objects against which the Chela has committed non-virtuous actions. By taking refuge in the three, the Chela offers his Bodhicitta Vow in order to liberate all living creatures.

The next stage is; having remembered the non-virtuous actions, he must feel sincere regret about it, not guilt. The next step is to offer to promise to turn away from all such non-virtuous actions in future. The other path of practice is the collecting of the store of good merit to replace the previous store of black karma. This is built up by making at least one hundred thousand prostrations, mandala offerings, repetition of the hundred syllable mantra and the mantra of one's Guru's sacred name and offering all merit from this for the liberation of all living creatures. Once the Chela has completed amassing these factors, he continues with examination meditation, weighing advantages and disadvantages of the following or not following the practice.

### The Importance of Bodhi Citta

Bodhicitta is the enlightened attitude of compassion which makes it possible to develop the mind to the point of attaining Buddhahood in order to liberate all living creatures from their suffering. If you do pure meditation without Bodhicitta you cannot be considered a Mahayana Buddhist on the great vehicle. Bodhicitta can be, meditated on at the beginning of each meditation session. Prayer for attainment of Buddhahood is done only in order that

attainment may liberate all living creatures. The mind on the two stages of the Tantric path should be developed in such a way that there is determination never to weaken.

### Sila

Sila means discipline or moral self-control. A layman keeps about five ordination vows. A novice monk or nun has 36 ordination vows, a fully ordained nun has 364 vows. To follow Tantra requires a proper formal Abhiseka or Wing (initiation from a fully qualified tantric master). After ordination Abhiseka or wing) there are 64 Bodhisattva vows and 22 tantric vows to be kept.

If you practice Tantra as a layman, you still keep the five ordination vows of the layman. Meditation is done and, in between meditation sessions, it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that you have taken on the form of the Yidam (meditation deity) which represents that aspect of the full enlightenment or Buddhahood to which you are karmically attracted. It is important to meditate with single minded concentration (samadhi). The mandala is visualised along with deity.

The development stage of Tantra is very necessary before you can practice the completing stage of Tantra. The completing stage gives insight into Sunyata. Very few people can understand the profound meaning of Sunyata. Sunyata deals with the emptiness of existence but it is incorrect to think of Sunyata on the level of ultimate truth or to think that even the Dharma teachings are empty. One of the great teachers, Nagarjuna, once said, "if your understanding of Sunyata is mistaken, it does not matter how educated you are - you are wasting your intelligence. And, if you do not accept Sunyata at all, then you are left "stuck" in this impure world of suffering". The correct view of understanding Sunyata is to know that the relative level and ultimate level of truth work in harmony with each other and to know that all things are void of any true independent self - existence. What makes the understanding of Sunyata so difficult is the difficulty of holding the following two insights together without any contradiction between them.

These two are the pacification and elimination of all ideas of true independent self-existence of all things, and yet the ability to accept the operational existence of everything from the point of view of illusory level of truth.

It is very rare to find a teacher who can really teach and a disciple who can really learn. It is even rarer to find someone who can effectively teach how to develop single-minded concentration on Sunyata and someone who will study this naturally and put it into practice. It is not possible to understand Sunyata through reading or hearing. It is necessary to achieve a single-minded concentration that joins together mental quiet (Samatha) and direct intuition of insight (Vipassana). This is why the text stresses the necessity of both Samatha and Vipassana. Even the direct disciple of Buddha, when Gautama Buddha was alive, found the understanding of Sunyata difficult. There are many methods which seem to vary in detail but the effects are much the same. Many examples of these are aids to stilling the concentration.

THE EIGHT VERSES OF TRAINING THE MIND  
(Composed by Kadampa Geshe Lang-ri-thang-pa).

With the determination to accomplish the highest welfare for all sentient beings, who excel even the wish-granting Gem (chintamani), may I at all times hold them dear.

Whenever I associate with someone may I think myself the lowest among all and hold the other supreme in the depth of my heart.

In all actions may I search into my mind, and as soon as klesa arises, endangering myself and others, may I firmly face and avert it.

When I see beings of wicked nature, pressed by violent sin and affliction, may I hold these rare ones dear as if I had found a precious treasure.

When others - out of envy - treat me badly with abuse, slander and the like, may I suffer the defeat and offer the victory to others.

When the one whom I have benefited with great hope hurts me very badly, may I behold him as my supreme Guru.

In short, may I, directly or indirectly, offer benefit and happiness to all my mothers; may I secretly take upon myself the harm and suffering of the mothers.

May all this remain undefiled by the stains of keeping view the Eight worldly Principles; may I - by perceiving all Dharmas as illusive - unattached be delivered from the bondage (Samsara).

Whosoever studies these verses, it will be seen that they contain the principles which have been explained in the main points of the Graded Course to Enlightenment.