The Lamp for the 
Path to Enlightenment 
Translated by David Choephel

In Sanskrit:  Bodhipathapradīpa
In Tibetan:  Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma
In English:  The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

I prostrate to the youthful bodhisattva Manjushri. 

HOMAGE

1. I prostrate with immense respect to all the 
Victorious Ones 
Of the three times as well as to their Dharma and 
the Sangha. 
Upon the urging of my good disciple Jangchup Ö, 
I shall illuminate the lamp for the path to 
enlightenment.

THREE TYPES OF PERSONS

2. Know that there are three kinds of persons— 
   Lesser, middling, and supreme. 
   I shall write clearly distinguishing 
   Each of their characteristics.

3. Those who by whatever means 
Pursue for their own sake 
   Merely the pleasures of samsara 
   Are known as the lowest persons.

4. Turning their backs on worldly pleasures, 
And spurning all acts that are misdeeds, 
   Those who seek peace for just themselves 
   Are called the middling persons.

5. Those persons who, from the suffering 
   In their own being, truly wish 
   To fully end all miseries 
   Of others are supreme.

6. For those great beings who desire 
   Supreme enlightenment, 
   I shall explain the perfect methods 
   That the gurus taught.

AROUNGING BODHICHITTA

7. Facing a painting of the Buddha 
   And so forth, a stupa, and the True [Dharma], 
   Make offerings of flowers, scents, 
   And all the things you own 

8. As well as the seven offerings 
   Taught in Samantabhadra’s prayer. 
   Resolving to never turn back till 
   The essence of enlightenment,

GOING FOR REFUGE

9. Have sincere faith in the Three Jewels, 
   Kneel down with one knee on the ground, 
   Then join your palms, and first of all 
   Go three times for refuge.

10. Beginning with an attitude 
   Of loving-kindness for them all, 
   Regard all sentient beings who suffer 
   In the three lower realms or else 
   From birth and such or death and so forth.

11. Wishing to liberate all beings 
   From the suffering of suffering, 
   From sufferings, and their reasons, 
   Arouse the irreversible 
   Resolve to attain enlightenment.

12. In the Gañḍavyūha Sūtra, 
   Maitreya has explained in full 
   The qualities of thus arousing 
   Aspirational bodhichitta.

13. Read sutras or else listen to a lama, 
   And learn the limitless qualities of the mind 
   Of perfect enlightenment. Then as a reason, 
   Repeatedly rouse bodhichitta thus.

14. Here I will cite three verses from 
The Sutra Requested by Viradatta 
That briefly summarize its merits 
As they have been taught.

15. “If the merit of bodhichitta 
   Were to have a form, 
   It would fill all the realms in space 
   And yet be even greater.

16. “If someone were to fill with jewels 
   As many buddha realms 
   As there are sand grains in the Ganges 
   And offer them to the buddhas,

17. “The offering of someone who 
   Joined palms and imagined bowing 
   To enlightenment would be far greater, 
   For it does not have any limits.”

18. After rousing aspirational bodhichitta, 
   Always enhance it with abundant efforts. 
   To remember it in other births as well, 
   Properly keep it as has been explained.

VOWS: RESTRAINT FROM NEGATIVE DEEDS

19. Without the vow of engaged bodhichitta, 
   Perfect aspiration will not grow. 
   You want the wish for enlightenment to grow, 
   So surely make the effort to take the vow.

20. If you continually maintain a vow— 
One of the seven pratimoksha vows

Root Text of Atisha's Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Enlightenment
Or else another—you’ve the fortune for
The bodhisattva vow, not otherwise.

21. Among the seven kinds of pratimoksha,
   In explanations by the Tathāgata,
The glory of chaste conduct is supreme:
   This is intended as the bhikshu vows.

22. Take the vow through the ritual
   Described in the chapter on discipline
   Of The Bodhisattva Levels from
   A good, well-qualified lama.

23. One skilled in the vow ceremony,
   A person who lives by the vow
   And has the patience and compassion
   To give the vows, is a good lama.

24. In case you are unable to find
   Such a lama despite your efforts,
   I’ll properly explain another
   Ritual to take the vow.

25. Here I shall clearly write of how
   When he was Ambarāja long ago
   Manjushri aroused bodhichitta
   As was described within The Sutra
   Of the Array of Qualities
   Of Manjushri’s Buddha Realm.

26. “In the presence of the guardians,
   I make the resolve of bodhichitta.
   I invite all beings as my guests—
   I’ll liberate them from samsara,

27. “From this day on till I achieve
   Supreme enlightenment,
   I’ll have no thoughts of malice, anger,
   Stinginess, or envy.

28. “I’ll cultivate chaste conduct and
   Give up wrongdoing and desire.
   With joy in the vows of discipline,
   I’ll train in following the buddhas.

29. “I’ll take no delight in quickly gaining
   Enlightenment for myself.
   With just one being as a reason,
   I’ll stay until the end of time.

30. “I’ll purify inconceivable,
   Limitless numbers of realms.
   I’ll be remembered by my name,
   Which will remain in the ten directions.

   DISCIPLINE TO MAINTAIN THE VOWS

31. “In every way I’ll purify
   My deeds of body and speech.
   I’ll cleanse my mental acts as well—
   I shall do nothing unvirtuous.”

32. The cause of a pure body, speech, and mind
   Is to keep the vow of engaged bodhichitta.
   Practicing the three trainings of discipline well,
   Your respect for the three trainings will be great.

33. Thus effort at the [Bodhi]sattva’s vows
   For pure and perfect awakening
   Perfects the accumulations for
   Complete enlightenment.

34. All the buddhas say the cause
   Of perfecting the accumulations
   Whose natures are merit and pristine wisdom
   Is to develop clairvoyances.

35. Just as a bird whose wings aren’t fledged
    Cannot fly in the sky,
    Without the powers of clairvoyance,
    One cannot benefit beings.

36. The merits that those with clairvoyance
   Attain in one day and night
   Aren’t gained in even a hundred lives
   By those who do not have it.

37. Those who wish to swiftly complete
   The accumulations for perfect bodhi
   Accomplish the clairvoyances
   Through effort, not through laziness.

38. Without achieving shamatha,
   Clairvoyances will not occur.
   Thus make repeated efforts to
   Accomplish shamatha.

   TRAINING IN SHAMATHA

39. If the requisites for shamatha
   Are lacking, one might meditate
   Tenaciously for thousands of years
   But never accomplish samadhi.

40. Thus maintain well the requisites
   Taught in the Requisites for Samadhi.
   On any of the focuses,
   Rest your mind on virtue.

41. When yogis achieve shamatha,
   They also gain clairvoyances.
   Without the training in transcendent wisdom,
   The obscurations cannot be removed.

   TRAINING IN VIPASHYANA

42. Thus, to abandon all the obscurations—
    The cognitive along with the afflictive—
    Meditate continually on the yogas
    Of transcendent wisdom with its means.

43. Wisdom without the skillful means
    And means that lack the wisdom
    Are bondage, it is said, and thus
    Don’t discard either one.

44. To eliminate any doubts about
    What wisdom is and what means are,
    I’ll clarify the difference
    Between skillful means and wisdom.

45. Apart from the transcendent wisdom,
    All of the virtuous qualities
Such as transcendent generosity
Are means, explained the Victor.
46. Those beings who meditate on wisdom
Swiftly achieve enlightenment
By cultivating means, not just
By meditating on selflessness.

REALIZING EMPTINESS BY REASONING
47. Wisdom is taught to be the knowing
Of inherent emptiness
That realizes the aggregates,
Elements, and sense bases don’t arise.
48. It is not logical for the existent
To arise, nor for the nonexistent
Such as sky flowers. Both faults would apply,
So that which is both has no arising either.
49. Things do not arise from themselves,
Nor from another, nor from both,
Nor without cause, and for that reason
Inherently they have no nature.
50. Or else when analyzing whether
All dharmas are single or multiple,
No essence is observed and thus
They’re ascertained to have no nature.
51. The logics in the Seventy Verses,
Root Middle Way, and other texts
Explain how it’s established that
The nature of all things is emptiness.
52. Because this text would be too long,
I’ve not elaborated here.
But for the sake of meditation
I’ve merely taught the tenets they prove.
53. Therefore the natures of all dharmas
Cannot be not observed and thus
Meditating on selflessness
Is meditating on wisdom.
54. Just as wisdom sees no nature
Of any phenomenon at all,
Meditate with the logics taught
On wisdom itself, free of thought.

RESULTS OF MEDITATING ON VIPASHYANA
55. The character of this existence,
Born from thought, is thought.
Therefore abandoning all thought
Is the supreme nirvana.
Accordingly, the Bhagavan has also said:
56. “Thought—the great ignorance—makes us
Fall into the ocean of samsara.
Resting in thought-free samadhi,
Nonthought is clear as the sky.”

From The Dharaṇi of Entering Nonthought as well:
57. “When the victors’ children, without thought,
Contemplate True Dharma,
They transcend thoughts so hard to escape
And eventually achieve nonthought.”

58. Once you are certain from the scriptures
And logic that all phenomena
Have no arising and no nature,
Meditate without thoughts.
59. Thus as you meditate on suchness,
Warmth and so forth are gained in turn.
Then you’ll achieve the Truly Joyous—
It won’t be long till Buddhahood.

THE VAJRAYANA PATH
60. If you wish to easily perfect
The accumulations for enlightenment
Through pacifying, enriching, and the other
Activities achieved from mantra’s power
61. And through the power of the eight great siddhis
Of accomplishing the fine vase and so forth—
If you wish to practice the secret mantra
Taught in the action, conduct, and other tantras—
62. Then to receive the empowerment
Of the vajra master, please the guru
With service and offerings of wealth
As well as by carrying out commands.
63. When a guru who is pleased bestows
The full empowerment of the master,
Your misdeeds will all be purified;
You’ll have the fortune to gain the siddhis.
64. The great tantra of the primordial buddha
Emphatically prohibits it,
So the celibate should never take
The secret and wisdom empowerments.
65. If those who practice celibacy
Had those empowerments
And did what is prohibited,
The vows of discipline would be broken
66. And the practitioners would incur
A downfall that is a defeat.
They’d fall into the lower realms—
Accomplishment would elude them.
67. For those who’ve received the master
empowerment
Or who have known suchness, there’s no fault
In teaching or listening to any tantra,
Performing a fire puja, offering, or so forth.
68. Upon the supplication of Jangchup Ö,
I, the Elder Dipāṅkara Śrī,
Explained in brief the path of enlightenment
As I’ve seen taught in sutras and other Dharma.

This concludes The Lamp for the Path to
Enlightenment written by the great master
Dipāṅkara Śrī Jñāna. It was translated and
finalized by the great Indian abbot himself and the
great translator and editor Geway Lodrö. This
Dharma was written in the Tholing Temple in
Zhang Zhung