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A Brief List to Help Intelligent Novices

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KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

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Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

As indicated in the title, the work translated here is a series of short notes intended to benefit beginners, but it is aimed at both students and practitioners of Dharma alike. The first part is written to help students easily recollect some of the salient features of the different Buddhist schools and tenets. In this regard, it follows the genre in the Tibetan Buddhist literary tradition known as *jejang*, or memoranda consisting of concise notes intended as a mnemonic aid.

Despite being relatively brief, this text includes a comprehensive list of important and fundamental topics. Although it is not explicitly stated, here one can see how general thought and practices of the Greater Vehicle (Mahāyāna) lead to the tenets and practices associated with the Mantra Vehicle (Mantrayāna). One can infer that, for Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, the philosophical view is shared between these two strands of Dharma, while the main way in which Tantra is superior to Sūtra is its richness of methods.

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A Brief List to Help Intelligent Novices

*Namo buddhāya.*¹

Regarding the differences between Buddhists and non-Buddhists, those who do not accept produced phenomena as impermanent, defiled phenomena as suffering and liberation as peace are not Buddhists, and those who accept them as such are Buddhists.² Moreover, the main difference is that those who go to the Three Jewels for refuge are Buddhists and those who do not are not Buddhists.

With regard to the tenet systems of the Buddhists, there are two: namely, the Lesser Vehicle and the Greater Vehicle. Furthermore, those who accept the true existence of external objects are proponents of the Lesser Vehicle and those who do not accept this are proponents of the Greater Vehicle.

Within the Lesser Vehicle, there are two types: the Great Exposition (Vaibhāṣika) school and the Sūtra (Sautrāntika) school. Of these, it is the Great Exposition school that asserts that objects and consciousness are in contact and that the latter nakedly apprehends the former. It is the Sūtra school that asserts that objects are hidden from consciousness.³

Likewise, the Greater Vehicle is of two types: the Mind-Only (Cittamātra) school and the Middle Way (Madhyamaka) school. The Mind-Only school is the one that [584] realizes the mind as truly existing and the Middle Way school is the one that realizes that even the mind does not truly exist.

Moreover, the Mind-Only school is also of two types: the True Aspectarian (Satyākāravādin) school and the False Aspectarian (Nirākāravādin) school. They both assert that appearances are mind, but the True Aspectarians are those who assert true

existence with respect to the mere aspect, and the False Aspectarians are those who assert even that aspect is false.

The Middle Way school is also of two types: namely, the Autonomist (Svātantrika) school and the Consequentialist (Prāsaṅgika) school. The Autonomists are those who accept emptiness and so forth following the statement of a proof, and the Consequentialists are those for whom the elaborations of assertions are thoroughly pacified.⁴

The difference between Sūtra and Tantra is that the Mantra Vehicle is transcendent in terms of four features: being free from confusion, having manifold means, lacking difficulties, and being meant for those with superior faculties.⁵

Moreover, the Mantra Vehicle consists of four classes of Tantra. Action Tantra is that by means of which one pursues accomplishments through the mode of sovereign and servant, having generated the divinity in front of one's ordinary self.⁶ Conduct Tantra is that by means of which one obtains accomplishments through the mode of friends, having viewed both—oneself and the one in front—as divinities.⁷ Yoga Tantra is that in which the divine wisdom being—the pledge being—is located in oneself and sealed with the four seals; during meditation breaks, the wisdom beings leave by untying the seals and one remains as an ordinary being.⁸ Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra is distinguished by indivisibility with the deity—the pledge being and the wisdom being—and the wisdom of great bliss during every meditative session and the breaks.⁹

The essence of the path of mantra that causes ripening [585] is a receptacle for the arising of wisdom; that which causes liberation is the actual means that generates wisdom. This is from the point of view of the primary features of the Mantra Vehicle.

With regard to what causes liberation, the generation stage is of four types. What purifies birth through warmth and wetness is the fivefold generation of actual enlightenment. What purifies birth through an egg is generation from seed and drops. What purifies a womb birth is revealing from the birth. What purifies a miraculous birth is perfection in instantaneous recollection. Although each of these is purified individually, all types of birth are purified automatically.¹⁰

In terms of the perfection stage, the paths of the two middle empowerments have characteristics, and the path of the last empowerment is without characteristics. Yet, even within each of these, there are infinite numbers of methods on account of their having characteristics or not having characteristics, or being gross or subtle.¹¹

The ultimate luminosity of realization is the dharmakāya of the Buddha. In relation to that, all luminosities of the trainees are the luminosity of experience. Moreover, for the trainees, experience occurs during the day and realization occurs at night. During daytime, when the six consciousness aggregates' perceptions of luminosity have not subsided, there is experience; when these have subsided, there is realization. During the night, when the other three perceptions have not been fully merged,¹² there is

experience; when they have been merged, there is realization, and so on. Thus, the subdivisions are numerous.¹³

The ground, path, and result of the Great Seal are as follows: the unfabricated mind's way of abiding is the ground, recognizing its inherent nature is the path, and its actualization is the result.

Regarding the three great ones, Great Perfection (Dzogchen) is the one that mainly focuses on appearances, the Great Middle Way (Great Madhyamaka) is the one that mainly focuses on emptiness, and the Great Seal (Mahāmudrā) [586] is the one that mainly focuses on union.

In terms of the four yogas of the Great Seal, the yoga of singlepointedness is mind abiding as emptiness and luminous, the yoga of freedom from elaborations is seeing one's inherent nature as it is, the yoga of the single taste is the understanding of appearance and mind in union, and the yoga of non-meditation is the exhaustion of all characteristics. These correlate with the paths accordingly: the yoga of singlepointedness is correlated with the path of accumulation and path of application, the yoga of freedom from elaborations is correlated with the path of seeing, the yoga of the single taste is correlated with the seven impure stages, and the yoga of non-meditation is correlated with the purified stages.¹⁴

The three vows are as follows: the vow of individual liberation is the avoidance of harming others and the causes of that, the vow of the bodhisattva is to accomplish benefits for others as much as possible, and the vow of unsurpassed secret mantra is for both of these to be infused by divinities and wisdom.¹⁵

Within the Perfection Vehicle, on the occasion of armorlike practice,¹⁶ each of the six transcendental practices is comprised of six; similarly, in the Mantra Vehicle there exists a mode of meditation where the respective meditations and recitations related to the tutelary deity are connected to the five paths.

The first two—(1) the path of accumulation and (2) the path of application—comprise refuge, bodhicitta, and the accumulation of merit through the seven-limb practice with respect to the field of merit. Through mantras such as *svabhāva* and so forth,¹⁷ (3) the path of seeing is the emptiness that purifies all that appears as subject and object. Then, visualizing¹⁸ the form body is (4) the path of meditation, namely, the eight stages. The blessings and the wisdoms entering the three abodes¹⁹ are the three pure stages. After the empowerment has been bestowed, being sealed with the lord of the family is awakening. Recitation is turning the wheel of the Dharma. [587] Finally, absorption into luminosity is passing beyond suffering. Emerging from that as the union body and entering into (5) the path of conduct are the illustration of incessant enlightened activities.²⁰

In this way, having taken the aspect of the result as the path, the swift accomplishment of the result is the unsurpassed feature of mantra.²¹

NOTES

1. “Obeisance to the Buddha.”
2. Generally, Tibetan teachers and scholars of Buddhism propose four pronouncements—the so-called “four seals of the Dharma.” The one that is not listed here is that all phenomena lack essential nature. For a lively presentation of these four principles with examples from modern life, see Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse, 2007.
3. For a detailed presentation of the view, meditation, ethical conduct, and result of the Buddhist paths according to these two schools, see Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo’s *theg pa’i rnam dbye gsal bar byed pa’i gtam legs bshad ngo mtshar chu gter*, 91–100.
4. For a detailed presentation of these, see *theg pa’i rnam dbye*, 101–9.
5. See *theg pa’i rnam dbye*, 119–23. This set of four is found in the *Lamp of the Three Methods* (**Nayatrāyapradīpa*; *tshul gsum sgron me*).
6. For Khyentse Wangpo’s elaborate comments on this class of the tantric cycle, including the empowerments, practices, pledges, conduct, results, and scriptures, see *theg pa’i rnam dbye*, 128–31.
7. On this tantric class, see *theg pa’i rnam dbye*, 131–34.
8. On this tantric class, see *theg pa’i rnam dbye*, 134–36.
9. On how this class of tantric practices surpasses the three aforementioned ones, see *theg pa’i rnam dbye*, 137.
10. For more on this topic, see Kongtrül, *The Treasury of Knowledge: The Elements of Tantric Practice*, 65–66. See also Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche, *Generating the Deity*, ch. 4.
11. For a general introduction to the two stages—namely, the generation and perfection stages—see Harding, *Creation and Completion*.
12. Merging in this case refers to a particular meditative technique connected with the perfection stage, where the grosser state of mind is merged into a progressively subtler state through physical exercise, breath control, and visualizations.
13. For a detailed explanation of these points, see Kilty, *A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages*.
14. For a summarized explanation of Mahāmudrā and associated teachings from the Kagyu perspective, see Kongtrül, *Treasury of Knowledge: Esoteric Instructions*, 208–31.
15. For a detailed and different list that falls under the general rubric of the three vows, see Gorampa’s *sdom gsum rab dbye’i spyi don yid bzbin nor bu*.

16. This is one of the seventy topics related to the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* tradition. See Gorampa's *mismon byed chos rnams kyi yan lag rgyas par bshad pa sbas don rab gsal*.
17. This refers to the much-recited mantra related to the view of emptiness (OM SVABHĀVA ŚUDDHĀḤ SARVADHARMĀḤ SVABHĀVA ŚUDDHO 'HAM).
18. The Tibetan verb *blta* is rendered here as “visualizing,” following the context.
19. The three abodes are the head, throat, and heart. Here the term refers to the visualization practices where the three abodes of the practitioner are purified by light coming from the guru's three places.
20. Note that Khyentse Wangpo connects the fifth path (usually defined as “no-more-learning”) to conduct. This connection is found in other texts, like the *Samten Migdrön*, which emphasizes the activity of the bodhisattva after realization and emerging from meditative equipoise. See, for example, Esler, *The Lamp for the Eye of Concentration*, 162. For a general account of tantric meditation connected with the two stages, and particularly with generation stage, see Kongtrül, *The Treasury of Knowledge: The Elements of Tantric Practice*, 59–123.
21. This is likely shorthand for the “Mantra Vehicle,” which is well known for its efficacy.

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GLOSSARY

Action Tantra

བྱ་རྒྱུད། • *bya rgyud* • kriyātantra

The first of the four types of Tantra according to the New Translation school of Tibet.

armorlike practice

གོ་ཆའི་སྒྲུབ་པ། • *go cha'i sgrub pa* • sannāhapratipatti

This is one of the first topics among the seventy that comprise the core content of the *Ornament of Realization* (*Abhisamayālaṃkāra*). It refers to the path of bodhisattvas where six transcendental practices are integrated into individual practices.

Autonomist school

རང་རྒྱུད་པ། • *rang rgyud pa* • svātantrika

According to a distinction made by Tibetan scholars, certain followers of Madhyamaka adhere to the logical approach of Bhāvaviveka, which states that relative phenomena essentially exist in a conventional way but not ultimately, and thus it is possible to use autonomous argumentation in debate to establish a common subject between opponents.

Conduct Tantra

སྦྱོད་བརྒྱུད། • *spyod brgyud* • caryātantra

The second of the four types of Tantra according to the New Translation school of Tibet.

Consequentialist school

ཐལ་འགྱུར་བ། • *thal 'gyur ba* • prāsaṅgika

According to a distinction made by Tibetan scholars, certain followers of Madhyamaka adhere to the approach of argumentation advanced by Buddhapaṇita, which uses *reductio ad absurdum* and negation without requiring a common subject between opponents.

eight stages

མ་བརྒྱུད། • *sa brgyad*

These are the first eight stages of the noble bodhisattvas.

fivefold generation

མངོན་བྱང་ལྷ་བསྐྱེད། • *mngon byang lnga bskyed*

This refers to specific visualization practices connected with the generation stage of tantra, which themselves have five different stages.

four classes of Tantra

རྒྱུད་སྡེ་བཞི། • *rgyud sde bzhi*

The four types of Buddhist tantra: Kriyātantra, Caryātantra, Yogatantra, and Anuttarayogatantra.

four types of birth

སྐྱེ་གནས་བཞི། • *skye gnas bzhi*

These are the four modes how sentient beings come into existence according to traditional Buddhist sources. They are birth from an egg, birth from a womb, birth from warmth and moisture, and miraculous birth.

four yogas of the Great Seal

ཕྱལ་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོའི་རྣམ་འབྱོར་བཞི། • *phyag rgya chen po'i rnal 'byor bzhi*

These are the four classifications of the meditative states within the tradition of the Great Seal (Mahāmudrā).

generation stage

བསྐྱེད་རིམ། • *bskyed rim* • utpattikrama

This level of tantra is related to the vase empowerment. The main practice involves the visualization of meditative deities and the recitation of mantra.

Great Exposition school

ཁྱེ་སྒྲ། • *bye smra* • vaibhāṣika

This Buddhist school propounds an epistemological theory of sense perceptions directly seeing their respective objects.

Greater Vehicle

ཐེག་ཆེན། • *theg chen* • mahāyāna

In this context, the Greater Vehicle is to be understood as including those who do not accept the true existence of external or material objects.

jejang

བརྗེད་བྱང་། • *brjed byang*

A genre of memoranda, consisting of notes to refresh the memory.

Lesser Vehicle

ཐེག་དམན། • *theg dman* • hīnayāna

In the text translated here, the author defines the Lesser Vehicle as including those who accept the true existence of external or material objects.

Middle Way school

དབུ་མ་པ། • *dbu ma pa* • madhyamaka

This Buddhist school does not accept any ultimately true existence of any phenomena whatsoever.

Mind-Only school

སེམས་ཅམ་པ། • *sems tsam pa* • cittamātra

The term Cittamātra or Mind-Only is related to the cognate concept of Vijñaptimātra (Cognition-Only) and to the Yogācāra tradition founded by the Indian masters Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, which is also sometimes called Vijñānavāda (School of Consciousness). The unique approach consists of aiming to demonstrate that everything in the world is nothing but mind; in other words, the objects one relates to are nothing but mental representations devoid of external independent existence (hence the name Mind-Only).

path of conduct

སྟོད་ལམ། • *spyod lam*

This can refer specifically to the behavior of a bodhisattva, especially their daily activities. It also encompasses the four activities of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down.

perfection stage

རྫོགས་རིམ། • *rdzogs rim* • niṣpannakrama

This is a generic name for tantric practices connected to the last three of the four empowerments; among other things, it involves physiological exercises like control of breathing.

proof

གཏན་ཚིགས། • *gtan tshigs* • hetu

This word has the connotation of proof or ground, on which basis conclusions are reached.

seven impure stages

མ་དག་ས་བདུན། • *ma dag sa bdun*

These are the first seven stages of the noble bodhisattvas. Some sources argue that they are impure since bodhisattvas still experience conceptual grasping.

six consciousness aggregates

ཚོགས་བླ་གྱེད། • *tsbogs drug*

This refers to the six sense consciousnesses and the mind consciousness in relation to experiences of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, textures and mental objects.

Sūtra school

མདོ་སྡེ་པ། • *mdo sde pa* • sautrāntika

Proponents of this Buddhist school subscribe to a theory of sense perceptions being sequential to their object.

three great ones

ཆེན་པོ་གསུམ། • *chen po gsum*

These are the Great Perfection (Dzogchen), the Great Seal (Mahāmudrā), and the Great Middle Way (Uma Chenpo).

three perceptions

སྒྲུང་གསལ། • *snang gsum*

This refers to mental perception, perception of self-awareness, and yogic direct perception. In the text, one also finds a discussion on the first in the set of four, namely, sense perception.

three pure stages

དག་པ་ས་གསལ། • *dag pa sa gsum*

These are the last three stages of the bodhisattva's path (namely, the eighth, ninth, and tenth).

three vows

སྡོམ་པ་གསལ། • *sdom pa gsum* • trisaṃvara

The vow of individual liberation, the vows of the bodhisattva, and tantric vows.

true existence of external objects

ཕྱི་དོན་བདེན་གྲུབ། • *phyi don bden grub*

A philosophical tenet attributing an essential and irreducible nature to the elemental building blocks of the material world.

tutelary deity

ཡི་དམ། • *yi dam*

The deity that one has a special practice connection to.

ultimate luminosity

འོད་གསལ་མཐར་ཐུག། • *'od gsal mthar thug*

Although this term has different meanings depending upon the context, here it refers to the final realization, which is equated with the dharmakāya.

union body

ཟུང་འཇུག་གི་སྐུ། • *zung 'jug gi sku*

In this context, the union body refers to the enjoyment body and the emanation body, two enlightened dimensions that benefit sentient beings.

Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra

བླ་མེད། • *bla med* • anuttarayogatantra

The fourth of the four types of Tantra according to the New Translation school of Tibet.

way of abiding

གནས་ལུགས། • *gnas lugs*

The way of abiding in this context refers to the way a mind exists when it is not disturbed or distracted by subject–object dichotomies.

Yoga Tantra

རྣལ་འབྱོར་རྒྱུད། • *rnal 'byor rgyud* • yogatantra

The third of the four types of Tantra according to the New Translation school of Tibet.