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དགའ་བའི་རྣམ་མོ།

Song of the Joyful Cuckoo: Verses on the Tenets

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

grub pa'i mtba' brjod pa'i tshigs su bcad pa gzhan gsos dga' ba'i rol mo

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Khyentse Vision Project: Translating the Works of
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

In classical Indian literature, the cuckoo is the herald of spring, whose soft cry inspires tender feelings of joy. In a similar way, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's beautiful verses arouse delight and inspiration in the fortunate listener. By introducing them, stanza by stanza, to systems of increasing subtlety of view and practice, he skillfully guides the seeker through the forest of Buddhist scriptures to a place of ultimate fulfillment.

After the opening lines on the qualities of enlightened speech, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo points out the fundamental delusion at the root of saṃsāra: the belief in a self. The reader is then gradually introduced to the various tenets, beginning with the realist system of the Vaibhāṣika school. According to this view, the constituent parts of physical matter and mind are subtle particles and the shortest moments of cognition, respectively, both of which are accepted as ultimately real phenomena. The next stanza introduces the doctrine of the Sautrāntika school, which differentiates between actual entities (i.e., specifically characterized phenomena), which function in the world and are objects of direct perception, and mere names (i.e., generally characterized phenomena), which are not real and merely objects of the conceptual mind. This doctrine builds a bridge to the two Mahāyāna tenets introduced in the following two stanzas. According to the Yogācāra view, all outer phenomena are nothing but mind, the true nature of which is to be recognized as pristine wisdom, devoid of the duality of subject and object. The deepest level of analysis, however, is reached through the Madhyamaka system, the last of the four tenets, alluded to in terms of the view of the inseparability of relative and ultimate reality.

The final stanza introduces the highest level of tantric practice, evoking the special use of skillful means to bring forth the refined levels of awareness used to accomplish the supreme path of Vajrayāna. The structure of the poem, guiding the reader step by step through the various views and culminating in the path of tantra, mirrors the instructions from the Hevajra Tantra:

The Bhagavān replied:
First, bestow the rite of restoration,
Followed by the ten precepts.
Then instruct them in the Vaibhāṣika doctrine,
Followed by that of the Sautrāntika,
Yogācāra, and Madhyamaka.
Then, once they know all the stages of mantra,
Bestow the instructions on Hevajra.
Disciples who respectfully receive these
Will become accomplished—there is no doubt!¹

Thus, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's poem can be read as a commentary on these lines, illuminating the main points of each tenet system and the purpose of an all-inclusive approach to the path.

གཞན་གསེས་དགའ་བའི་རྣམ་མོ།

Song of the Joyful Cuckoo

*Susreyantu!*²

The wisdom roar,³ the voice of Nondual Speech,⁴ [157]
Is free of veiling words and in all aspects complete.
As such, it has the ability to resonate in tune with disciples' minds—
May you now and forever be blessed by these means!

Belief in a self, both acquired and innate,
Is but a baseless delusion, for it is neither one nor many.
May the light of this awareness
Banish the darkness at the root of all flaws.

In the beginning, may the door of intelligence be opened with ease
To access the modes of the two realities,
Designating the smallest spatial extension of objects as particles,
And the shortest moments of the subject as cognitions.

Skilled in distinguishing all phenomena in terms of their relative and ultimate nature
On the basis of the generally characterized phenomena of appearing objects
And the specifically characterized phenomena of direct perception,
May the lotus of reason smile in full bloom.

May you approach the path of the supreme vehicle
By establishing outer phenomena as images painted by the mind,
Just like the appearance of objects in a dream,
And settling this mind itself in nondual pristine awareness.

How wonderful! On the level of appearance, things arise in dependence;
Their true nature is beyond all elaboration.
By realizing both to be in union, without contradiction,
May the inconceivable dimension be fully revealed.

Then, through the luminosity of the indivisibility of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa
Brought forth by blissful means, [158]
Joined inseparably with the nondual illusory body of the deity,
May the deathless and sublime eternal state be actualized!

*Sarvasiddhānta bodhyantu.*⁵

NOTES

1. *Hevajra, the King of Tantras, Section Two*, 27a7–27b1.
2. “May there be auspiciousness!”
3. “Wisdom roar” translates the term *yeshe nāda*, which combines both Tibetan and Sanskrit (*ye shes nā da*). According to the Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary, *nāda* means “a loud sound, roaring, bellowing, or crying.” In this sense, the Buddha’s speech is likened to a lion’s roar (*simhanāda*; *seng ge’i sgra*), a sound that eclipses that of its rivals. In the tantric teachings, the term *nāda* also carries a more mystical aspect in relation to the nature of the mind, the unborn resonance that is the basis for all appearances. See *Rangjung Dorje, The Profound Inner Principles*, 128–29.
4. Nondual Speech (*gnyis med gsung ba*) is an epithet of Buddha Śākyamuni.
5. The Dzongsar 1919 edition has the correct spelling of *bodhyantu* (cf. Dzongsar 2014, *bo bhyantu*). This final prayer may be translated as “May those who follow all the tenet systems awaken.”

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GLOSSARY

acquired belief in a self

ཀུན་བརྟག་པའི་བདག་ཏུ་འཛིན་པ། • *kun brtag pa'i bdag tu 'dzin pa*

A mistaken belief in the existence of a self, derived from specific world views or philosophical systems.

appearing object

སྣང་ཡུལ། • *snang yul* • pratibhāsaviṣaya

The object perceived by the mind, as opposed to the actual object itself. According to Sautrāntika, the conceptual mind perceives its object in terms of general characteristics, and the nonconceptual mind in terms of particular characteristics.

conventional

ཀུན་རྫོབ། • *kun rdzob* • saṃvṛti

One of the two categories used to determine the nature of phenomena. The conventional, or conventional reality, is explained to be the way things appear, as opposed to the way they really are. See *two realities* and *ultimate*.

directly perceived

མཛོན་སྲུང་པ། • *mngon sum pa* • pratyakṣa

The object of unmistakable direct perception.

elaboration

སྟོན་པ། • *spros pa* • prapañca

The process of discursive or conceptual activity. Elaborations are generated by apprehending the signs of an object.

generally characterized phenomena

སྟིའི་མཚན་ཉིད། • *spyi'i mtshan nyid* • sāmānyalakṣaṇa

Objects of the conceptual mind that have no ability to perform any function in actuality. They are termed *generally characterized* because the features that define them are shared with other objects of the same conceptual category. See *specifically characterized phenomena*.

illusory form of the deity

སྒྱུ་མའི་ལྷ་སྒྱུ། • *sgyu ma'i lha sku*

A form of the deity that is composed of subtle winds. It is the third of the five stages of the completion stage according to the Guhyasamāja system.

innate belief in a self

ལྷན་སྦྲེས་ཀྱི་བདག་དུ་འཛིན་པ། • *lhan skyes kyi bdag tu 'dzin pa*

An innate belief in the existence of a self, that is not derived from any specific world views and philosophical systems.

level of appearance

སྣང་ཚུལ། • *snang tshul*

Synonym for conventional reality.

luminosity

འོད་གསལ། • *'od gsal* • prabhāsvara

Generally, the term luminosity denotes the mind's inherent purity, obscured by afflictions and conceptual thought. In tantric practice, luminosity is accessed through skillful means and utilized for insight practice. It is the fourth of the five stages of the completion stage according to the Guhyasamāja system.

neither one nor many

གཅིག་དང་དུ་མ་བྲལ། • *gcig dang du ma bral* • ekāṇekavicāra

A line of reasoning used to establish that the object of refutation does not exist, because it is neither a whole, nor an entity composed of individual units.

nondual pristine awareness

གཉིས་སུ་མེད་པའི་ཡེ་ཤེས། • *gnyis su med pa'i ye shes* • advayaājñāna

Awareness emptied of the dualistic framework of object and subject.

specifically characterized phenomena

རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད། • *rang gi mtshan nyid* • svalakṣaṇa

Specifically characterized phenomena, or particulars, are objects of direct perception and have the ability to perform a function in actuality. They are so called, because they are defined by the specific features unique to each individual phenomenon. See *generally characterized phenomena*.

true nature

གནས་ལུགས། • *gnas lugs*

Synonym for ultimate reality.

two realities

བདེན་གཉིས། • *bden gnyis* • satyadvaya

The two categories used to determine the nature of phenomena and perception: conventional reality and ultimate reality. These are interpreted differently according the various tenets. See *conventional* and *ultimate*.

ultimate

དོན་དམ། • *don dam* • paramārtha

One of the two categories used to determine the nature of phenomena. The ultimate, or ultimate reality, is explained to be the way things really exist, as opposed to the way they appear. See *two realities* and *conventional*.

union

ཟུང་འཇུག། • *zung 'jug* • yuganaddha

The term *union* generally denotes the union of two components, such as conventional and ultimate reality, or skillful means and wisdom. In this particular context it designates tantric practice of uniting luminosity with the illusory form of the deity generated through the generation stage practice. It is the fifth and last stage of the completion stage according to the Guhyasamāja system.