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གཞན་གསོས་དགའ་བའི་རྣམ་མོ།

Song of the Joyful Cuckoo:
Verses on the Tenets

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

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

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Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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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་གསོས་དགའ་བའི་རྣམ་མོ།

Song of the Joyful Cuckoo

*Suśreyantu!*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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