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བསྐྱེད་བའི་གསོལ་འདེབས་མོས་གྲུ་གྱི་དབྱེངས་སྟོན།

A Melody of Devotion: A Supplication  
Invoking the Crucial Vows of the Gurus,  
the Protectors of the Three Families

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

*bla ma rigs gsum mgon po'i thugs dam gnad nas bskul ba'i gsol 'debs mos gus kyi dbyangs snyan*

B62

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Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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## INTRODUCTION

The prayer translated here is composed of three sets of eleven verses of supplication addressed to the three famous Buddhist bodhisattvas—Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Vajrapāṇi—in that order. Collectively known as the Lords of the Three Families, they are some of the most famous bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna tradition, myths, and narratives. Additionally, the prayer is supplemented by two verses on the dedication of merit.

The contents of the supplication comprise what is generally called the Stages of the Path, or Lamrim in Tibetan, and this term is indeed mentioned in the text and the colophon. Lamrim is made up of the topics of study, contemplation, and cultivation that an aspiring Buddhist practitioner should cultivate and generate within the stream of their own mind. These include ethical discipline, meditative concentration, spiritual ideals like benevolence and compassion, and insights into the nature of phenomena and their apparent reality. Some of the fundamental characteristics of Lamrim are its systematic approach to the presentation of the Buddhist path, including both study and practice. Lamrim literature unpacks the entire Buddhist journey in a highly organized and logical manner. Another feature is the comprehensive and exhaustive nature of the presentation of the path. Even in a short Lamrim text, the teachings of the Buddha—from the very fundamental taking of the five precepts or reflection on the nature of cyclic existence and its causes, all the way to abstract ideas like meditating on the view of nonduality and presentations on the nature of mind—appear as a continuous process. The Lamrim genre is famed for coherently integrating contemplative topics from all the Buddhist vehicles in such a way that not only are the seeming differences and incompatibilities among the vehicles dissolved, but the entirety of the paths emerge as an organic whole, with the cultivation and contemplation of the lower vehicles logically and necessarily leading

to those of the higher ones, like the lower flights of a staircase leading above. One of the finest examples of Lamrim—interwoven with supplications, aspirations, and exhortations—is *The Experiential Songs of the Stages of the Path* by Je Tsongkhapa.

In the first eleven stanzas here, all of which are addressed to Mañjuśrī, the supplications present such fundamental Buddhist practices as the four thoughts that turn the mind to the Dharma, generating the attitude of genuine heartfelt sadness at the world and its suffering, seeking and relying on a spiritual master, observing ethical discipline, and going through the process of hearing, reflecting on, and meditatively cultivating Buddhist teachings. In this section, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo prays to Mañjuśrī, emphasizing such paragons of Buddhist scholarship as gaining masterful command over different sciences, and most especially the tantras. He also mentions the traditional activities of accomplished scholars: exposition, composition, and engaging in dialectical debates. The author then proceeds to supplicate that, upon successful completion of study, Mañjuśrī may guide and inspire the practitioner to dedicate themselves to the actual practice, that is, to cultivate the stages of the paths of sūtra and tantra in a secluded place. Moreover, he requests that if the apotheosis of Buddhist practice—namely, awakening—is not attained in this life, Mañjuśrī will guide the practitioner during death, the intermediate states, and future lives. Regarding this section, an interesting observation can be made about its ontological reflection on the identity of Mañjuśrī being not so much a historical person (both mundane and divine) but the actual personification of the wisdom of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Here, Khyentse Wangpo identifies Mañjuśrī as the luminosity experienced at the time of death.

The second eleven verses are addressed to Avalokiteśvara. As expected, they focus on the elements of the compassion of the buddhas and their spiritual heirs. Khyentse Wangpo supplicates the deity for the removal of adverse conditions that limit and obstruct spiritual practice and the multiplication of conditions that are favorable for the flourishing of the Dharma—such as spiritual teachers, companions with proper orientation, places, and sustenance that provide support in a practical manner, and inner qualities like devotion, compassion, and discriminating knowledge. Made with enthusiasm, the supplications reveal a deep yearning for realization, yet at the same time they acknowledge the current limitations imposed by habitual patterns. Khyentse Wangpo thus requests that Avalokiteśvara assist in the achieving of loving kindness, compassion, twofold bodhicitta, and the discriminating wisdom that penetrates the veils of appearance and reveals reality as it is.

The last section of the supplications is addressed to Vajrapāṇi, the bodhisattva in whom the three secrets of the buddhas and their spiritual heirs are subsumed. Vajrapāṇi is addressed with a descriptive epithet: Lord of the Secrets. Khyentse Wangpo

requests him to protect those living during the degenerate age from the sufferings of disease, warfare, famine, and afflictive mental states. Furthermore, the supplications make a heartfelt plea to guard these beings against the decline of the external world and the darkness of the terrible trinity of attachment, aversion, and ignorance. Also included in the supplications addressed to Vajrapāṇi are a brief mention of the stages of the path of tantra, such as maturation through empowerments, observation of the tantric pledges that one commits to at the time of empowerments, the cultivation of tantric meditation, and the attainment of the mundane and supramundane accomplishments. This indicates the importance of this deity in the world of tantric lore, myths, and practices.

The prayer to the three bodhisattvas ends with a long colophon in prose, mentioning the names of those who requested the verses and its place of composition, as well as the aspiration that the author had for the potential readers of the prayers.

མོས་གུས་དབྱངས་སྒྲོན།

## A Melody of Devotion

Homage to Guru Mañjughoṣa!

With undivided and heartfelt respect, I supplicate Guru Sthiracakra,<sup>1</sup>  
In whom the bodies and wisdoms of all the victorious ones  
Pervading space are subsumed.  
Gaze upon me with your eyes of compassion, O Mañjuśrī!

On this occasion, when I have acquired human birth, endowed with leisure and  
opportunities that are difficult to attain,  
Being diligently mindful of death and with urgency,  
I am not attached to all the glories of cyclic existence.  
Generate in me the intelligence of aspiration for liberation, O Mañjuśrī!

From this moment and in all my successive lives,  
Connect me with the good fortune of being able to attend,  
Through the triple means of pleasing,<sup>2</sup>  
To the lotus feet of the guru, the virtuous friend endowed with the qualities, O  
Mañjuśrī!

Upholding the pure ethical discipline received from the guru,  
I arrive at great learning and reflection that goes beyond.  
Open the hundredfold doors of the samādhi  
Of calm abiding and higher insight through single-pointed cultivation, O  
Mañjuśrī! [229]

Grant me the unerring intelligence to tame unwholesome speech  
And the ability to care for others,  
Not being ignorant with regard to the common sciences  
And especially the ascertained secrets of the sūtras<sup>3</sup> and the classes of tantras, O  
Mañjuśrī!

Grant me the glory of speech so that I may have skill in teaching, attract the  
attention of millions of intelligent ones,  
Debate so as to destroy the mistaken pride of opponents,  
And, by means of writing learned compositions, clarify for a very long time  
The teachings of the victorious ones, O Mañjuśrī!

Without being attached merely to conventional states,  
In a secluded place may I correctly cultivate the stages of the paths of the sūtras and  
tantras.

Spontaneously generate in me the qualities  
Of experience and realization, O Mañjuśrī!

If I fail to gain stability in this life,  
May I perceive the actual Mañjuśrī in the luminosity of death.  
Care for me without interruption  
In the dharmakāya citadel, O Mañjuśrī!

If I become deluded once more and wander through the bardos,  
May the supreme Guru Sthiracakra  
With myriad manifestations guide me to the pure realms  
Where you bestow the comforts that have been prophesied, O Mañjuśrī!

Even if I am reborn in cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions,  
May I attain a life of freedom and advantages, activate the potential of the supreme  
vehicle,  
And create the auspicious conditions to complete the remaining paths  
Without difficulty, O Mañjuśrī! [230]

In brief, in all the states—this life, the next life, and the bardos—  
Not looking for a refuge other than you, the protector,  
Directly grant the virtuous qualities  
That spontaneously accomplish the twofold benefit for oneself and others, O  
Mañjuśrī!

\*\*\*

Homage to Guru Lokeśvarā!

The embodiment of the compassion of all the buddhas and their heirs  
Is given the name Guru Padmapāṇi.  
To you I undividedly and fervently pray.  
Consider me strongly with your compassion, O Avalokiteśvara!

For all beings—myself and those similar to me, born in a degenerate end-time—  
Sinking in the ocean of suffering,  
There is no other refuge than you, the protector.  
Therefore, pull us from the mire of suffering, O Avalokiteśvara!

Though this body is adorned with the eight leisures and ten opportunities,  
Many are the conditions that can destroy it and few are those that sustain it.  
Since there are so many obstacles to living in harmony with the Dharma,  
Ward off that which is in discord with it, O Avalokiteśvara!

Grant me spiritual teachers and virtuous companions,  
Secluded places, and necessities conducive to practicing the Dharma,  
Devotion, compassion, knowledge, virtuous diligence, and so on,  
Which are favorable conditions and positive supports, O Avalokiteśvara!

Having no confidence that I will not die tonight,  
I, a lazy one, still procrastinate in practice.  
Therefore, since the time for the holy Dharma will never come, [231]  
Forcefully destroy my delusion, O Avalokiteśvara!

Since I have not truly overcome my attachment to cyclic existence,  
My accrued virtue is lost due to pursuing mundane goals.  
In me, the lowly one who is bereft of the seeds of liberation,  
Generate intense renunciation, O Avalokiteśvara!

Thinking only of freeing myself from cyclic existence,  
There is no means to attain the state of omniscience.  
For the sake of others, generate uncontrived love,  
Compassion, and bodhicitta within me, O Avalokiteśvara!

As long as the cognition of self-grasping exists,  
The delusion of subject and object will not cease.  
Therefore, with the sword of discriminating knowledge  
Cut the net of conceptual elaborations, O Avalokiteśvara!

In brief, may I master the practice of the Dharma in this life  
And be free from intense pain at the moment of death.  
As I ride twofold bodhicitta,<sup>4</sup> may you lead me  
To greater and greater happiness, O Avalokiteśvara!

Wherever I am born, may I encounter a spiritual teacher.  
Whomever I befriend, may I be free from the binding of attachment and aversion.  
However I practice, may it never stray  
From the supreme conduct of awakening, O Avalokiteśvara!

Eventually, having succeeded in abandonment and self-realization,  
Being endowed with the activity of all-pervasive compassion for others,  
May you swiftly grant me the state where I am indistinguishable  
From both you as protector and your example, O Avalokiteśvara! [232]

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Homage to Guru Vajrapāṇi!

The embodiment of the three secrets of the guides and their heirs  
Is Guru Vajrapāṇi, at whose feet I supplicate  
With yearning and heartfelt longing.  
Come bless me directly, O Guhyādhipati!<sup>5</sup>

Beings born at the end of the degenerate age,  
Wherever they stay, are besieged by diseases,  
Warfare, famines, and Māra with his entourage.  
Protect them from all these with vajra armor, O Guhyādhipati!

Especially regarding the three types of malevolent spirits—celestial,  
Terrestrial, and subterranean—who variously snatch away the life force  
Of beings and bring great suffering to the deteriorated world,  
Tame them with your power and strength, O Guhyādhipati!

Furthermore, concerning the eight and sixteen fears<sup>6</sup>  
And many other inharmonious obstacles  
That bind the body, speech, and mind of oneself and others like iron chains,  
Slice through them with your wisdom sword, O Guhyādhipati!

When I am oppressed by the gloom of attachment, aversion,  
And the ignorance of improper thinking,  
Dispel the darkness of the afflictions  
With the brilliant sunrays of your compassion, O Guhyādhipati!

Although momentarily the virtuous mind arises,  
Obstacles of demons and their diabolical designs  
Shift my frame of mind in perverted ways.  
Destroy hindrances on the path to enlightenment, O Guhyādhpati! [233]

After I have achieved mastery over renunciation, twofold bodhicitta,  
And the ocean-like conduct of the heirs of the victors,  
Quickly grant the state  
Of omniscient wisdom, O Guhyādhpati!

Since you hold the entirety of the discourses of the Buddha,  
And especially the Vajrayāna,  
Spontaneously generate in me the auspicious conditions, without exception,  
Of the path of the great secret, O Guhyādhpati!

After I have matured by means of empowerments,  
Perfectly pure pledges, and the final samādhi of the two stages,  
Generously grant me a banquet  
Of mundane and supermundane accomplishments, O Guhyādhpati!<sup>7</sup>

If cyclic existence is not transcended in this life,<sup>8</sup>  
As long as rebirth continues, let me always be born with a superior body endowed  
with freedoms and advantages  
In a family line that is beautifully adorned  
With the seven qualities of the higher realms, O Guhyādhpati!<sup>9</sup>

After I have met a spiritual teacher immediately after being born  
And correctly cultivated the nectar of speech,  
Directly grant me the good fortune  
Of a state where my qualities are similar to yours, O Guhyādhpati!

In this manner, through the power of invoking the vows and supplicating  
The bodhisattvas of the three families, the glorious gurus  
In whom the wisdom, love, and power of the victorious ones  
And their heirs of all the directions and times are gathered,

May all aspirations be quickly accomplished as wished for, [234]  
The holders of the Dharma live long, and the explanatory and practice teachings  
flourish.

May beings be endowed with the wealth of a perfect eon  
And be granted the auspiciousness of every goodness in existence and cessation.

*This was written at the earlier behest of the treasure revealer Lodrö Zangpo, dignified with devotion, faith, and generosity; Jamyang Yönten, rich in intelligence; and the close attendant Tsultrim Gyatso,<sup>10</sup> who asked for a supplication with the aspirations of the Stages of the Path. Later on, from a distance, something like this was fervently requested by the following pair: the lord of yogis and great practitioner Chöying Palden, whose lotus of cognition was fully opened through the nectar of the wisdom insight of the sovereign Vajra Queen, and the great practitioner Lodrö Palden.<sup>11</sup> It was composed at the monastic house of Tartse at Pal Ewam Chöden,<sup>12</sup> a source of numerous precious qualities, by the servant of gurus, the ignorant wanderer Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. Through the merits of single-pointedly supplicating with a pure heart, may uncontrived precious bodhicitta arise in the mental continuum of anyone connected to it by means of recitation and so forth.*

*Sarvadā kalyāṇaṃ bhavatu.<sup>13</sup>*

## NOTES

1. This name refers to the sādhanā of the sphere of stability (*Sthiracakrasādbhanam*), which is specifically associated with Mañjuśrī. See the Mañjuśrī section (44–45) of the Sādhanamālā (*sgrub thabs rgya mtsho*), a compilation of 312 tantric sādhanas gathered by Abhayākara Gupta in the twelfth century.
2. The triple means of pleasing one’s spiritual teachers include offerings of material wealth, serving with one’s body and speech, and putting into practice the instructions of the teacher.
3. Here “sūtras” (*mdo*) refers to the Three Baskets (*sde snod*), not sūtras alone.
4. The twofold bodhicitta mentioned here could be relative and ultimate bodhicitta, or it could be the bodhicitta of equality between oneself and others and the bodhicitta of exchanging self-cherishing with cherishing others.
5. This phrase is an epithet of Vajrapāṇi. The three secrets of the buddhas and their spiritual heirs are the secrets of body, speech, and mind.
6. The eight fears are those of fire, rivers, poison, weapons, armies, enemies, famine, and death. The list of sixteen fears differs from context to context, although many items overlap. One of the standard lists of the sixteen fears includes fire, rivers, snakes, flesh eaters, elephants, prison, thieves, lions, a king’s punishments, enemies, evil spirits, leprosy, straying from friends, famine, lightning, and loss of one’s prosperity.
7. This verse can be seen as a very learned summary of the tantric paths and practices.
8. The Tibetan conditional phrase here is *grub mtha’ ma snyogs* [read: *rnyogs*] *na*, a technical term that is particularly associated with the Lamdre teachings of the Sakya tradition, and used to denote the transcending of cyclic existence. For a very succinct summary of this important concept within the context of the highest Vajrayāna practices and thought, see Gorampa, *lam ’bras smon lam*, 672.
9. The seven qualities of higher rebirth are as follows: a good family, beautiful physique, long life, lack of illness, good fortune, prosperity, and intelligence.
10. For Tsultrim Gyatso (tshul khriims rgya mtsho, nineteenth century), an attendant who accompanied Khyentse Wangpo to Central Tibet, see Akester, *The Life of Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo*, 208.

11. It has not been possible to identify the two individuals named Chöying Palden (chos dbyings dpal ldan) and Lodrö Palden (blo gros dpal ldan).
12. For a detailed treatment of Pal Ewaṃ Chöden (dpal e waM chos ldan), see Heimbel, *Vajradhara in Human Form*, 2017.
13. “May there always be blessings!”

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# GLOSSARY

## Avalokiteśvara

ཕྱན་རས་གཟིགས། • *phyan ras gzigs*

The bodhisattva of compassion.

## frame of mind

སློལ། • *blo sna*

Mental disposition.

## guides

རྣམ་འདྲེན། • *rnam 'dren*

Epithet of buddhas, which literally means “leaders.”

## higher realms

མཐོ་རིས། • *mtsho ris*

The realms of the gods, considered a superior rebirth.

## Jamyang Yönten

Jamyang Yönten ('jam dbyangs kong sprul yon tan rgya mtsho, 1813–1890) is mentioned as one of the teachers of Jamyang Sherab Chökyi Nangwa (1854–1893). See <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Jamyang-Sherab-Chokyi-Nangwa/8753>.

## Kāmadeva

ཡིད་སྐྱབས། • *yid srubs*

Kāmadeva is an epithet of Māra, the lord of illusion.

## Lodrö Zangpo

སློ་བློས་བཟང་པོ། • *blo gros bzang po*

Lodrö Zangpo (blo gros bzang po, nineteenth century) is also mentioned in the biography of Ngawang Legpa, taking care of him at what was a very difficult time in his teenage years. See <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/81607>.

### Lords of the Three Families

རིགས་གསུམ་མགོན་པོ། • *rigs gsum mgon po* • trikulanātha

The bodhisattvas symbolizing the enlightened body, speech, and mind of the buddhas of the three times.

### luminosity at the time of death

འཇིབ་འོད་གསལ་དོན་གྱི་འཇམ་དཔའི་དཔལ། • *'chi ba 'od gsal don gyi 'jam dpa'i dpal*

The clear light experienced during the first bardo after death.

### Mañjuśrī

འཇམ་དཔལ། • *'jam dpal*

The bodhisattva of supreme intellect and wisdom.

### Pal Ewam Chöden

དཔལ་ཨེ་ཧོ་ཚོས་ལྷན། • *dpal e waM chos ldan*

The main monastic seat of the Ngor tradition of the Sakya school.

### Stages of the Paths

ལམ་རིམ། • *lam rim*

A means of presenting the paths to enlightenment, first introduced by Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa* in the eleventh century.

### stages of the paths of sūtra and tantra

མདོ་སྔགས་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ། • *mdo sngags lam gyi rim*

The two aspects of Lamrim.

### Tartse

ཐར་རྩེ། • *thar rtse*

One of the four monastic houses of Ngor monastery.

### The Experiential Songs of the Stages of the Path

ལམ་རིམ་མཉམ་མགྲུ། • *lam rim mnyam mgur*

A seminal text by Tsongkhapa on Lamrim.

### Tsultrim Gyatso

ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། • *tshul kbrims rgya mtsbo*

Tsultrim Gyatso (nineteenth century) accompanied Khyentse Wangpo as an attendant during a journey to Central Tibet.

### Vajra Queen

དོན་རྩི་བུཌྱ་མོ། • *rdo rje btsun mo* • Vajrayoṣit

The female buddha Vajrayoṣit is found in such tantras as the *Gubhyasarvacchindatantra* (Toh. 384) and *Śrīkhasamatantrārāja* (Toh. 386).

### Vajrapāṇi

བརྗོད་པུ་ཉི། • *badz+ra pA Ni*

The terrific bodhisattva of enlightened activity.

wisdom insight

ཡེ་ཤེས་གཟིགས་པ། • *ye shes gzigs pa* • jñānadarśana

Knowledge of the way to liberation.