THE ESSENCE OF REFINED GOLD

An Explanation of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment

by the Third Dalai Lama SÖNAM GYATSO

Translated under Venerable Dagpo Rinpoche’s guidance by Rosemary Patton

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Chemin de la Passerelle • 77250 Veneux - Les Sablons • France
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INDEX OF CITED TEXTS

Asvaghosha
Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion (Gurupañcasika) ........................................ 12

Atisha Dipamkara Srijñana
Lamp for the Path (Bodhipathapradipam) ........................................ 5, 15, 16

Jey Tsongkhapa
Song of Experience ................................................................. 4, 41

Maitreya
Precious Ornament of Mahayana Sutras (Mahayanasutralamkara) ........ 7

Shantideva
Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life (Bodhicharyavatara) ............. 9, 10

Sutras and Tantras
Guhyasamaja Root Tantra .................................................................. 12
King of Concentrations Sutra (Samadhirajasutra) ................................ 21

Third Dalai-lama Sönam Gyatso
Essence of Refined Gold (Lamrim Serchuma) ................................... 41

INDEX OF CITED MASTERS

Arya Asanga ................................. 12
Asanga ........................................ 3, 4, 9
Atisha .......................................... 9
Avalokitesvara ......................... 9
Bodhisattva Nāgarjuna ............ 9
Do Chö Jey .................................... 41
Drom .......................................... 9
Dromtönpa ................................ 13
Jey Tsongkhapa ......................... 4
Maitreya ..................................... 9, 12
Nāgarjuna ................................ 3, 4, 11, 18
Naropa ....................................... 12
Seringpa .................................... 3
Sönam Gyatso .......................... 41
Tathagata Vajradhara .............. 9
Telopä ........................................ 9, 12
Tsongkhapa .............................. 40
Vidyakokila ............................... 3
Vimuktisena ............................. 9
The essence of refined gold

An Explanation of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment

The greatness of perceiving that all the teachings are free of contradictions.

The greatness of recognizing all the scriptures as instructions for practice.

The greatness of easily discerning the Conqueror's main ideas.

The greatness of automatically avoiding grave misdeeds.

Contemplate the benefits of correctly reciting or teaching the instruction.

The Six Preliminary Practices.

The Way to actually Rely on the Spiritual Masters.

1. Exhortation to draw full advantage from a human rebirth with freedom and fortune.

2. How the path of those kinds of beings incorporates all the scriptures.

3. Explaining why one is to be guided by the paths of those kinds of beings.

4. Training the mind along the stages of the path shared with lesser beings.

5. Training the mind along the stages of the path common to intermediate beings.

6. Training the mind along the stages of the path of great beings.

The Six Perfections.

Cultivate the four means of gathering disciples.

Tantra.

The essence of refined gold

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The Six Perfections.

Cultivate the four means of gathering disciples.

Tantra.
Moreover in his song, my master1 said,

Transmitted in a line including both Nāgārjuna and Asanga -
Crown jewels of all the world’s sages
And banners of fame resplendent among beings -
The stages of the path to enlightenment
Fulfil all the goals of living beings without exception.
Thus this teaching resembles a wish-granting gem.
Uniting the streams of a thousand good scriptures,
It is also an ocean of glorious and excellent words.

This instruction by far surpasses all others, being endowed with four aspects of greatness:

1. The greatness of perceiving that all the teachings are free of contradictions

By relying upon this instruction, among the multitude of the Conqueror’s scriptures, you will understand that some were taught as major aspects of the path while others as auxiliaries to it, and that all either directly or indirectly serve as means for any given individual to realize Buddhahood.

2. The greatness of recognizing all the scriptures as instructions [for practice]

It allows you to completely reverse the false notion that the scriptures, sutra and tantra, and their valid explanatory commentaries are simply material to study broadly and to explain to others and that the essential teaching to be practised is found elsewhere. You consider the scriptures and their commentaries as your core practice, their entire substance

1 Jey Tsongkhapa, henceforth referred to as ‘Jey Rinpoche’, from the short lamrim in which he describes his personal spiritual progression, called the Song of Experience. The following is the sixth verse of this work, after five initial verses of homage. Unless otherwise specified all the remaining quotes from Jey Rinpoche are drawn from the Song of Experience.

16 The Third Dalai Lama
The complete path that rejoices the Conquerors.
By this virtue I pray
May all beings never be separated from this pure and invaluable path.
I, the yogi, pray in this way,
You who aspire to liberation, should do the same!

Thinking that Jey Rinpoche himself has spoken these words to you, say,

"From now on, in all my lives, bless me that
I may respectfully honour your lotus feet,
Listen to your words, and act physically, verbally and mental
Only so as to please you."

And,

"In all my lives, from the Conqueror Tsongkhapa..."

In the way practise dedication from the depths of your heart.

"With this faultless instruction that include the essential points
Of the stages of the path to enlightenment, the core teaching
Of Tsongkhapa and Jowo Dipankara,
May I guide all living beings along the path that rejoices the Conquerors."

---

being condensed in a series of steps [lamrim] that start with the way to rely upon the spiritual master and go on to mental serenity and special insight. You see them as practical instructions that indicate how to apply analytical meditation to the topics to be analysed, and concentration meditation to those to be focused upon.

3. **The greatness of easily discerning the Conqueror’s main ideas**

Although the great texts -scriptures and commentaries- are the supreme teachings, when novice practitioners, like us who are untrained in the meaning of these vast and important works, fail to rely on excellent oral instructions, even if they try to penetrate their meaning by study and contemplation, either they will not correctly understand their true significance or doing so will require considerable time and effort. On the other hand, by relying on an excellent master’s instructions, a lamrim like the *Lamp for the Path*, you can discern the meaning of the great texts without difficulty.

4. **The greatness of automatically avoiding grave misdeeds**

Having [discerned the meaning of the great texts] you will understand that all Buddha’s words are either direct or indirect means to achieve Buddhahood. apprehending some as showing the way to Buddhahood and requiring application while perceiving others as obstacles to Buddhahood produces a karma of abandoning the teaching. Thanks to the present instruction, as explained above, simply by ascertaining that all the teachings are free of contradiction you automatically avoid this grave misdeed of abandoning the Dharma.

Given it is endowed with the four aspects of greatness explained above, those who possess the intelligence to penetrate the significance of scripture or who wish to acquire it cannot help but delight in the stages of the path of the three kinds of beings, the supreme instruction practised
and relied upon by many fortunate sages of India and Tibet, and it is only fitting that they should hear, contemplate and meditate it.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

As it allows one to realize that all the teachings are free of contradiction,
To recognize all scriptures as instructions [for practise],
To easily discern the Conqueror’s main ideas,
And to be guarded from the abyss of grave misdeeds,
It is the supreme instruction followed by countless fortunate ones:
The sages of India and Tibet.
What intelligent person would not delight
In the stages of the path of the three kinds of beings?

[Next], CONTEMPLATE THE BENEFITS OF CORRECTLY RECITING OR TEACHING THE INSTRUCTION with the four aspects of greatness that condenses the essence of all the Conqueror’s words - the stages of the path of the three kinds of beings.

If reciting or explaining it for just one session brings immense advantages, what is to be said of doing so in its entirety? In this way generate respect for the Teacher and the teaching. By accurately explaining [the lamrim, which condenses all scriptures] to people who are suitable recipients, with pure thoughts and behaviour, you draw the considerable benefits of correctly explaining the [entire] Teaching. Correctly listening consists of rejecting the three faults like a vessel’s flaws and ensuring you have the six recognitions and so on when listening. This is the way to draw the great benefits of hearing Dharma. Once fully you are fully convinced of acquiring these, it is only suitable to endeavour to listen and teach correctly and this is precisely what you should do.

[TANTRA]

Having attained a spontaneous experience [or at least an experience with effort] of the paths common to both sutra and tantra, you must without doubt engage the practice of tantra. The way to do so is first to have your mindstream ripened by an initiation conferred by a vajra master endowed with the qualities taught in tantra. Thoroughly keeping the vows and commitments made at the time, you will train in sign and signless yogas according to the first three classes of tantra, and train progressively in the two stages’ yogas, according to the highest class. In this way you will implement the complete path that includes all the essential points of sutra and tantra, thereby making your attainment of freedom and fortune meaningful and ensuring that the Conqueror’s precious teaching truly affects both your mind and others’ minds. You should meditate [Jey Rinpoche] before you and repeat this promise, “Jey Rinpoche himself practised in this way. I and all his followers shall do the same.” You say it sincerely and joyfully, stimulating yourself to truly committing yourself.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

Having properly achieved the common qualities Needed for both excellent mahayana paths - causal and resultant,
By relying on the pilot and protector of the wise,
I have engaged in the vast ocean of the various classes of tantra,
And by all the instructions of that doctrine Made my attainment of freedom and fortune meaningful.
I, the yogi, have practised in this way.
You who aspire to liberation should do the same!

Next, to practise dedication, say,

To familiarize my mind with it
And to serve other fortunate ones,
I have elucidated in a way that is easy to understand,
emptiness. Seeing this, think, “Striving to achieve the union of serenity and insight is marvellous!” pray to achieve it and strive to place imprints on your mind for it.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

It goes without saying that by one-pointed meditation
You achieve samadhi; furthermore by correct analysis
With discriminative cognition you can generate a samadhi
That abides in emptiness immovable and exceedingly firm.
Remarkable are those who, knowing this,
Strive to accomplish the union of serenity and insight!

Thus you place your mind in a state of one-pointed, space-like concentration on emptiness, free of discursiveness, an absorption that combines serenity and insight as just described. When you rise from that state, subsequent to it you will meditate illusion-like emptiness in which, although phenomena lack inherent existence, they appear nevertheless to have it.

The bodhisattva practice that combines wisdom and method, being imbued with compassion and bodhichitta, and leading you beyond, is indeed praise-worthy. Being aware of this, do not be content with only part of this path of inseparable method and wisdom. Since following the path of inseparable wisdom and method is fortunate beings’ way, you must apply yourself fully to it.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

Meditating both space-like absorption on emptiness
And subsequent illusion-like emptiness,
Combining method and wisdom,
Is praised as the perfection of the Conqueror’s sons’ practice.
Realizing this, it is the custom of the fortunate ones
Not to be content with an incomplete path.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

Given that it condenses the essence of all scriptures,
Teaching, reciting and listening to [the lamrim] even once
Is sure to bring the various and numerous benefits of explaining and hearing
[All] the perfect Dharma; contemplate the significance of this.

If correctly listening to such an instruction carries these immense advantages you may wonder from what kind of person you should hear this superior teaching. In general the sutras and tantras, the greater and the lesser vehicles give various definitions of teachers from whom it is appropriate to hear the holy Dharma. However the spiritual masters who are kind enough to give such a precious instruction as this one, according to the Precious Ornament of Mahayana Sutras, should be disciplined by training in moral discipline, pacified by training in concentration and thoroughly pacified by training in wisdom. In other words they should have the quality of realization that is a mind tamed by the three [higher] trainings. Furthermore they should have the quality that is scriptural knowledge having extensively studied the Tripitaka and so forth. They should have the wisdom that thoroughly understands ‘thusness’ and their qualities should be superior to those of their disciples. These are the six qualities that Dharma teachers should have acquired. They should also thoroughly be aware of the steps of the spiritual path that they will explain and have good teaching skills so that their followers may access their meaning. They should have no concern for personal gain, honours and so forth and instead should be motivated by compassion. They should teach and recite the Dharma motivated purely by love. Furthermore they should explain the teaching enthusiastically, delighting in benefiting others. They should also overcome the inability to bear with the hardships that teaching involves and their followers’ incorrect practice. These are the four qualities that pertain to the way to care for others. You should follow those who have

2 Another term for emptiness
these ten characteristics and then from them receive mahayana teachings that are new to you or that you have heard before.

Those listening generally should be honest, have the ability to distinguish false from true and should be drawn to the excellent spiritual path. Moreover, they should respect the teaching and the teacher. These are four requisites. A disciple ready to be guided by this path in particular need four further qualities: great attraction to the Dharma, great attention when listening, profound respect and faith for the teaching and its teacher, rejection of faulty explanations and application of good explanations. Furthermore they should possess the contributing factor that is intelligence, and reject the obstacle that is partiality. So in fact six qualities in all are needed.

If you personally wish to become a teacher of this path, you must strive to acquire the characteristics of a spiritual master. And when you listen, work on securing the qualities of a listener.

[THE SIX PRELIMINARY PRACTICES]

Once you have correctly heard from a qualified spiritual master the explanation of the path of the three kinds of beings, how are you to practise? First, in a harmonious place you should set up images of the three Jewels and dispose flawless offerings in an attractive manner. Sitting in vajrasana on a comfortable seat, repeatedly take refuge in a heartfelt manner while truly thinking of what you are doing and putting your trust [in the Jewels]. Meditate the four immeasurable qualities. By repeating “In the Buddha, the Dharma and the excellent assembly…” generate the spirit of enlightenment. Recite “OM SOBHAWA…” [and think that] all phenomena are devoid of inherent existence and dissolve into emptiness. From emptiness, in space in front on a precious throne both high and wild borne by eight great lions, and on a seat formed by sun and moon discs and by a multicoloured lotus, appears the lama who

Grasping at self is the root of samsara, so meditating a path whose mode of apprehension is not diametrically opposed to it, such as one-pointed concentration alone, cannot destroy samsara’s root. On the other hand, without meditative serenity in which your focus on the object is undivided and unshakeable, no matter how much your wisdom realizing lack of true existence investigates the matter, you will not be able to overcome the kleshas. To achieve liberation, in which the kleshas have been abandoned, you need the view that understands the meaning of emptiness, the precise, definitive mode of existence, which rides the mount of unwavering meditative serenity. You must increase the intelligence that understands emptiness with the wisdom that correctly analyses the meaning of emptiness and destroys all objects of apprehension of extremes by means of the sharp weapon of the four great madhyamika arguments, free of the extremes of existence and non-existence.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

One-pointed concentration alone
Does not have the faculty to cut samsara’s root;
Wisdom dissociated from meditative serenity
Will not defeat the kleshas, despite considerable analysis;
But when the wisdom apprehending thusness
Mounts the horse of unwavering serenity,
With the sharp weapon of madhyamika reasoning, free of extremes,
All objects of grasping at extremes are destroyed.
With vast wisdom that analyses precisely
Expand the intelligence that ascertains thusness.

Furthermore, your should understand that by placing the mind immovably and one-pointedly on its object, you achieve the samadhi of serenity. In the same way, while remaining in a state of one-pointed concentration, by analysis using discriminative wisdom that correctly investigates the meaning of emptiness, you achieve the immovable, extremely firm state of concentration on the meaning of thusness or
Rely continually on samadhi that vanquishes the enemy, distraction.

Sixthly, to train in wisdom, motivated by the spirit of enlightenment, you must cultivate the wisdom realizing the ultimate that eradicates the root of samsara, the wisdom realizing conventional phenomena and on the basis of these two, the wisdom accomplishing living beings’ welfare.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

Wisdom is the eye that perceives ‘thusness’;\(^{15}\)
It is the spiritual path that tears up the root of samsara;
It is a mine of qualities praised in all scriptures,
And is known to be the best lamp to dispel the darkness of ignorance;
Knowing this, the wise who aspire to liberation
Strive to cultivate this path in a multitude of ways.

Secondly, to cultivate the four means of gathering disciples to ripen the mindstreams of others you first to generate the motivation by thinking, “For living beings’ sake I shall work toward realizing Buddhahood.”

1. Then by generosity in the form of giving material goods you bring people closer to you.
2. After ensuring that the expression on your face is attractive, you speak to them agreeably and put them at their ease.
3. Next you talk about pleasant subjects like the six perfections and encourage them to put into practice the Dharma that you have taught them.
4. You personally behave in a way that coincides with the practice of the six perfections as you have encouraged others to do.

Be determined to do all you can to train in these profound methods to achieve others’ welfare.

Having invited them in this way, visualise the bathhouse saying “In an exquisitely fragrant bath house…” Offer ablutions, wipe their bodies, and present clothing and ornaments. Saying, “Out of compassion for me and all beings…” and so forth, make offerings and request them to remain as your merit field in the way described in the *Bodhicharyavatara*.

Next practise the seven-part prayer that condenses the essential points for purification and accumulation. First say, “Your body condenses all buddhas’ [bodies]…” and “Great Compassion, Tathagata Vajradhara / Telopa who realised the supreme view…” [to pay homage to] the lineage of blessed practice. Say, “Maitreya, Asanga, Vasubandhu and Vimuktisena…” for the lineage of vast activities; Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna who destroys the extremes of existence and non-existence…” for the lineage of profound view. Say, “You who before the Conqueror…” for Atisha; “You the complete spiritual master...” for Drom[stonpa]; Avalokiteśvara, great treasure of universal compassion…” for Jey [Rinpoche] as well as “lung rigs sogs...”, “Your vast wisdom reinforces the strength of the profound…” [for Sherap Sengge] and “You have the

\(^{15}\) Another term for emptiness
qualities of knowledge and liberation...”, “Source of all wants and needs...” [for Gendun Gyatso] and “You from whom we have acquired knowledge...”, “Supreme guide, precious Buddha...” and “Out of compassion and skill you were born in the Shakya clan...”. Say from “However many there are in the world’s ten directions” up to “I pay homage and present offerings”. Then do the mandala offering, either abbreviated or long. Say, “As well as other extensive offerings” up to “Abiding individually in clouds...”.

Repeat the General Confession three times. Say from “All the ill deed I have done” up to “I dedicate all the realisation of enlightenment.” Then recite the prayer of supplication to the lamrim [lineage masters] called “Opening the Door to the Excellent Path” with a moving melody. Next, saying “Depart to excellent lands, your natural abodes”, invite them to depart. If you practise four or six sessions [daily] ask them to depart in the final session only. These are the preliminaries to the way to rely on the spiritual masters.

[THE WAY TO ACTUALLY RELY ON THE SPIRITUAL MASTERS]

To actually rely upon them you meditate using an analytical form of meditation. You think,

“My glorious and holy masters are the root of all spiritual attainments, they are the source of all goodness in this life and the next. Their kindness is great; like a doctor with a sick person, the lamas cure the disease of suffering. If I have wandered endlessly in samsara from beginningless time until now, it is because I did not meet an excellent spiritual master, or if I met one, because I failed to apply his instructions. Now I must do whatever pleases the lamas. Just as it is kinder to give a single bowl of food to a person dying of hunger than it

On this basis you practise enthusiastic effort in gathering virtue which enlarges your practice of all six perfections.

These two forms of enthusiastic effort lay the foundation for your blameless efforts to work for living beings’ welfare, you will then apply yourself with enthusiastic effort in accomplishing others’ goals.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

If you put on the armour of unshakeably firm enthusiastic effort
Your qualities of scriptural knowledge and realization will wax like the moon;
All your activities will become meaningful.
Once begun, an action will be completed as you wish;
Knowing this, the Conqueror’s sons exercise considerable enthusiastic effort
Which dispels all forms of laziness.

5-Fifthly, to train in concentration, motivated by the spirit of enlightenment you cultivate the two: mundane and supermundane concentrations.

From the angle of kind these subdivide into three: meditative serenity, special insight and the union of the two. From the angle of function they are classified into three: immediate results: the concentration in the present lifetime abiding in physical and mental bliss; the concentration that achieves the qualities of the higher realms, clairvoyance and so on; the concentration of accomplishing living beings’ welfare. You must train in these states free of laxity and excitement.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

Concentration is the king that rules the mind,
When focused it is unmoveable like the lord of mountains;
When directed it turns to any given virtuous object;
It induces the great bliss of physical and mental pliancy;
Knowing this, the great meditators

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5 From the Bodhicharyavatara
6 The name of the supplication prayer found in the Necklace of the Fortunate
and so on, as well as allowing me to feel disgust with samsara. When unwanted suffering occurs it is due to non-virtue, for never could a result exist without its cause”. In this frame of mind, do not engage in non-virtue. By practising patience when others harm you, the other perfections will be fully accomplished and Buddhahood achieved. When you see the masters who have given you the instructions for being patient in the face of harm, you will feel grateful to them. This is patience in the form of accepting suffering.

When you consider the immeasurable power of the three Jewels, of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, you will aspire to bodhisattva practice and selflessness and want to train in them. So you must devote yourself to developing the patience needed to overcome hardship in spiritual practice.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

- **Patience is the supreme ornament for the mighty;**
- It is the best of all austerities for those tormented by the kleshas;
- It is like a garuda to its snake-like enemy - hatred;
- It is formidable armour in the face of the weapons of harsh words;
- Knowing this, fully familiarize yourself
  With the different facets of patience - the finest defence.

4. To train in the fourth perfection, enthusiastic effort think,

“If I fail to meditate disgust with samsara I remain attached to the inferior pleasures of physical, verbal and mental idleness, copulation, sleep and so on, and I will give in to laziness. I must therefore reject these sources of indolence and channel all my energy towards virtuous deeds. In this regard there is [first] armour patience which lead you to think, “To succour a single living being alone, I’ll not be stopped by any hardship.”

is to give a fistful of gold coins to someone who is fully satisfied with food and riches, so for me, as it says in the Five Stages,

- “My lama is a true Bhagavat -
  My unique superior deity.
  As he gives oral instructions perfectly
  The vajra master’s [kindness] is greater than the buddhas’.’’”

Accordingly, contemplate the fact that [for you] the lamas’ kindness is indeed even greater than the buddhas’.

[Reason as follows.] “In the past when our Guide heard a single verse or even just half a stanza such as “If there is birth there is death / Happiness is the cessation of these,” to repay the guru this kindness or to please him, he would offer hundreds of thousands of gold coins, not to mention his princely sons, wife, vassals and the rest. He also stuck a thousand butter lamps into his body, and offered everything he owned. I am the follower of this guide. Now I can receive unlimited teachings from my lamas, indeed their kindness too is unlimited!

“These days when a lama has great learning people acknowledge his great kindness; if he does not, not only do they have not the slightest consideration for him they haughtily say “I heard Dharma from him” [as if they were doing him a favour in listening]. This attitude is completely wrong. For example even though your parent’s are uneducated you must acknowledge their kindness. Doing so will be very beneficial and failing to do so very prejudicial. It is the same in relation to the spiritual masters. Now when someone helps you a little financially you feel it was very kind of the person to do so yet the lamas ensure your happiness in all lives, present and future. When you examine the situation well it becomes clear that all good situations depend on whether or not one pleases the masters, from the condition of the buddhas and bodhisattvas down to that of simple householders. Furthermore the lamas have allowed many people to achieve Buddhahood in a single lifetime. If I please my lamas with the three

7 A commentary to the Guhyasamaja Tantra by Nāgārjuna
kinds of offering I too am sure to realize Buddhahood quickly. Therefore, since my teachers’ kindness is immeasurable, it is vital that I should try to please the benevolent lamas. Meeting and being protected by excellent masters in future lives depends entirely on pleasing the lamas with whom you now have a spiritual relationship. Therefore there is no alternative but to rely upon my masters faultlessly.

“In all the sutras and commentaries it is taught repeatedly “Be sure to please the gurus!” This shouldn’t be perceived as a burden, an undesirable choice or an obligation for who does not desire merit? And in the sutras, tantras, and treatises, everywhere it is taught that for the accumulation of merit there is no field superior to the gurus.”

What pleases the gurus is meditating faith, not superficially but from the depths of your heart. This consists in seeing only good in all they do and does not allow for even the slightest perception of faults in them. Meditate until just hearing their names or thinking of them gives you goose flesh and brings tears to your eyes.

If, generally speaking, the buddhas and bodhisattvas teach that it is inappropriate to seek fault with any living being, what is to be said of seeking fault with the gurus? [Think], “Although they appear to have flaws, it is my perception which is impure. How could the gurus have such faults? In the past Arya Asanga, having meditated Maitreya, saw him as a bitch with her hindquarters infested with maggots, Naropa saw Telopa roasting live fish and so on. Furthermore, in the Sutra of the Father and Son Meeting8 and elsewhere it is explained that the Tathagata also manifests himself as a demon to ensure the welfare of living beings. It is not possible that the gurus have flaws. They are buddhas in the flesh.” If you fail to do this, then by seeing flaws in the masters you will scorn them and so on which, as explained in the Guhyasamaja Root Tantra and elsewhere, is the greatest sin among all sins. [Think,] “Following the

2. The second is training in ethical discipline. [You think.]

“For the sake of others I will realize Buddhahood. For that purpose I will develop remembrance, watchfulness, self-respect and consideration for others and every time I do something, ensure not to perform non-virtue, even at the cost of my life. Based on the ethical discipline of abstention from wrongdoing I must develop all six perfections14. By relying on both of these I will work honestly for the sake of others. Thus I will train in the triple [bodhisattva] ethic.”

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

Ethical discipline is the water to cleanse the stains of wrongdoing;  
The moonlight that cools the painful heat of the kleshas;  
It makes you stand out from the crowd like a great mountain;  
By its force you can tame all beings without intimidating them;  
Knowing this, superior beings guard like their eyes
The ethical discipline to which they are committed.

3. To train in patience, [think],

“It is wrong to feel angry with those who have harmed me for if they hurt me it is in response to harm that I inflicted upon them in the past. Furthermore, given that they are did it completely under the influence of anger, it is not right to harm them in return. Moreover, a single moment of anger destroys the physical, verbal and mental virtue collected over aeons and aeons so I will not let an angry thought arise in even a corner of my mind.” This is the patience that endures harm. “When others hurt me and I suffer greatly from it, it serves to lower my pride, arrogance

8 Pitaputrasamagamasutra

14 This constitutes the 2nd bodhisattva ethic, that of practising virtue
To quote Jey Rinpoche,

**Bodhichitta is the main pillar of the great vehicle;**
*It is the base and the foundation for vast [bodhisattvā] activity;*
*For the two accumulations it is like the philosopher’s stone, transforming them into gold*
*It is a mine of merit that includes a myriad of virtue;*
*Having understood this, the heroic Conqueror’s sons*
*Make the supremely precious aspiration the very core of their practice.*

You may wonder, “It is sufficient to cultivate aspirational bodhichitta alone?” Indeed it is not. On its basis you must take bodhisattvā vows and train in the vast bodhisattvā activities. In other words you must develop the six perfections to ripen your own mind and the four ways of collecting disciples to ripen others’ minds.

**[THE SIX PERFECTIONS]**

1. Among the six the first [perfection] is generosity. To practise it first think,

“For the sake of all living beings I shall achieve Buddhahood.” With that motivation you explain the accurate and excellent spiritual path to all those who lack it. You protect those who fear the authorities, war and so on, those who are frightened by fearful living beings -demons, fierce animals, snakes and so on, as well as inanimate forces -fire, water etc. Without hesitation, you provide the poor with food, drink, beds, medicine and so on. In brief, you give without regret your body, belongings, and all your virtue of the three times.13

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

**Generosity is like a wish-granting gem, it fulfils living being hopes;**

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12 Literally ‘kings’
13 past; present and future

example of Dromtönpa’s life, I will not heedlessly seek out many teachers. Towards whichever lamas I follow, I must be sure to avoid even the slightest disrespectful thought, even at the cost of my life.” Reflecting in this way, conduct your meditation.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

**Then seeing that whatever goodness you experience in this life or the next Depends on its excellent causes coming together, the main one being Correctly relying on the perfect masters who teach the spiritual path, Fervently in thought and deed, Never abandon them even at the cost of your life, And please them by offering them the implementation of their advice. I, the yogi, have practised in this way. You who aspire to liberation do the same!” This is the instruction he gave us out of pure compassion.**

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9 Literally ‘bite your lip’

[i. exhortation to draw full advantage from a human rebirth with freedom and fortune]

It is necessary therefore to rely fervently upon the spiritual masters who teach the path and to please them by offering them the practice of their advice but you may wonder: what exactly is the advice to be carried out? It is a question of correctly implementing the holy Dharma as explained by the spiritual masters. And there is no better offering of one’s practice than taking full advantage of the wish-fulfilling gem that is a human life with freedom and fortune, so difficult to attain from the angle of both causes and results, and so meaningful once attained. So apply yourself with determination9 [thinking],
“Now that I have for once attained a human rebirth I would be foolish not to ensure that I do not come away empty handed. I must immediately put a stop to all three kinds of worldly concerns - black, white and a mixture of the two. There could be nothing worse than listening to or teaching the Dharma, guarding my precepts and so forth purely out of concern for suppressing my enemies, caring for my friends, impressing others, or motivated by a desire for personal gain and honours. I would thereby fail to engage in a sincere spiritual practice by meditating impermanence and so forth. On the other hand, on the basis of my present form of life, nothing could be better than practising the Dharma purely, for then I would not feel disappointed in myself and I would plant the roots for lasting happiness. I will turn from worldly activities which are as vain as winnowing chaff and to which I give greater importance that they merit. I will take full advantage of my present life with its great potential so that I do not have to die with regrets. Furthermore I will do so as of now.”

In this way you should meditate until the desire to use your freedom and fortune becomes like a thirsty person’s attraction to water.

Reflect on what Jey Rinpoche said,

| This life with freedom is superior to a wish-fulfilling gem. |
| But it is as if you have attained it just this once. |
| It is difficult to attain, easily destroyed, like a flash of lightening in the sky. |
| Reflecting upon this and realizing that all worldly activities are as vain as winnowing chaff, |
| You must day and night work to take full advantage of it. |

sake of living beings may I attain Buddhahood.” each time repeating it three times and generating the spirit of enlightenment.”

Thirdly, [never abandoning any living being] think,

“it is for the sake of living beings that I generate bodhichitta. Regardless of what happens on the side of living beings, from my point of view I will never at any time abandon any of them.”

Fourthly, [For endeavouring to accumulate the collections, think,]

“Now that for once I have generated the spirit of enlightenment, I ensure that it does not decline but instead grows stronger, I will endeavour to accumulate a vast collection [of merit] by making offerings to the Jewels and so on.”

To avoid being separated from the aspiration to enlightenment in others lives you must avoid the four black dharmas and rely upon the four white dharmas.

The four black dharmas are,

1- You should be completely avoid the black dharma that consists of trying to mislead your abbot, guru and so on, or anyone who has good qualities, by lying to them. The means to do so is to abstain from lying to any living being whatsoever, be it in jest or at the cost of your life.

2- The second black dharma is causing someone to regret the virtue they have performed when they have no cause for regret. This too you must refrain from entirely. Its remedy is to steer towards the great vehicle, and not the lesser vehicle, all those who are susceptible to be guided by you and who are ready for it.

3- The third black dharma is to speak roughly out of anger to those who have generated the aspiration to the great vehicle. This you must avoid doing at all cost. The antidote is to make a point of seeing all mahayanists as your teachers. When it is appropriate to do so praise them and endeavour to see all living beings in a positive light.

4- The fourth black dharma is to be hypocritical and deceitful in your relations with others, which you will give up altogether. Be determined to be honest with them.
The Essence of Refined Gold – The Third Dalai Lama Sönam Gyatso

It is not enough to generate the spirit of enlightenment in its aspirational form. The four causes that prevent your bodhichitta from weakening in this life are:

1. To stimulate your enthusiasm for generating bodhichitta, making a point of recalling its benefits.
2. To actually strengthen your aspiration to enlightenment, making an effort to produce it six times a day.
3. Making a point of never abandoning any living being for whose sake you generate bodhichitta.
4. Endeavouring to accumulate the collections.

As for the first, [the benefits]

1.1. By simply generating bodhichitta, already you become worthy of all gods' and men's offerings.
1.2. You surpass the hearers and solitary buddhas from the point of view of spiritual family.
1.3. You are not affected by illness, contagious diseases, harmful beings, etc.
1.4. You easily accomplish different kinds of activity, peaceful and so on.
1.5. You do not take rebirth in the lower realms and so forth.
1.6. You rapidly escape from them.
1.7. You rapidly overcome very serious sins.

If the benefits of generating the spirit of enlightenment were to take physical form it is said that space would not be big enough to contain them, so be determined not to let your enthusiasm decline and to intensify it.

Regarding the second, [making an effort to produce it six times a day]

1. If you neglect the aspiration to enlightenment, the maturation effect is more serious than that of transgressing one of the four major vows of ordination. So I will never give it up, until I reach Buddhahood.
2. Consequently, three times during the day and three times during the night I will recite the formula “In the Buddha, in the Dharma and in the excellent community, I take refuge until I reach enlightenment; by my practice of generosity and so forth, for the benefit of all living beings, I take refuge until I reach enlightenment.”

The Essence of Refined Gold – The Third Dalai Lama Sönam Gyatso
“With the will to turn from samsara’s pleasures, 
[And the path] whose nature is the rejection of sin, 
Whoever is concerned with personal peace alone 
Such being is known as ‘intermediate’."

Thus a simple intermediate being is said to be someone who turns his back on the good things of cyclic existence and sets as his goal the attainment of a state of personal liberation that frees him from samsara. To achieve it he engages in the practice of the three trainings.

There are two methods to achieve the state of omniscience: secret mantra and the perfection vehicle and both are included in the meditation topics of great beings.

On great beings the Lamp for the Path says,

“He who, based on his personal suffering, 
Wants only to eradicate 
All the suffering borne by others, 
Is known as a superior being.”

Accordingly, [a great being] is said to be someone who is overpowered by great compassion and who, to end all living beings’ suffering, sets Buddhahood as his goal. For that purpose he trains in the six perfections, the two stages and so on.

2. EXPLAINING WHY ONE IS TO BE GUIDED BY [THE PATHS OF] THREE KINDS OF BEINGS

Although the three kinds of beings are explained in this way, in the present context you must understand that the two lower paths prepare you to be guided along the path of great beings. There is no question of being guided along the path of actual lesser beings who set as their goal acquiring the good things of samsara alone, or along the path of simple intermediate beings who aim to attain liberation from samsara alone for their own sake. Although some paths shared with the two are assistance! The minds of these mothers who have shown me kindness countless times are now powerless, being half crazed by the demon-like kleshas. Their wisdom is blinded by their ignorance, they cannot see their way to good rebirths and certain goodness. They have no spiritual guides to steer them to the city of liberation. At every instant they are destabilized by misdeeds. Tormented, they stagger as they wander on the fearful cliff of samsara and the lower realms. If these helpless beings cannot count on me, their son, who then can they count on? If it is not my responsibility to free these mothers from their suffering, whose is it? Nothing would be more shameless and inconsiderate than forsaking my kind mothers and seeing liberation from samsara just for my own sake. However even if my mothers were to achieve the happy samsaric results like a rebirth as Brahma or rGya byin, these would not last. Now I will forsake my personal concerns and do all I can to free all living beings, who are as infinite [in numbers] as space is infinite, from samsara’s suffering and brings them the joy of supreme liberation. If only I could ensure happiness for all my old mothers who are deprived of happiness. May I ensure them happiness! I will do all that I can to ensure them happiness. If only I could free from suffering all my old mothers who endure suffering. May I free them from suffering! I will ensure that they are freed from suffering. I personally will do so. But do I have the capacity required? At the present moment without talking of all living beings, I am not capable of freeing even one living being from samsara’s suffering and bringing him supreme joy. Yet I have committed myself to doing so and if I were to give up my commitment I would fall into the lower realms. Given that a buddha is the only kind of being that has the capacity to free all living beings from suffering and bring them to a state of supreme joy, to protect all beings from all misery and lead them to supreme happiness I will do all I can to attain complete, perfect Buddhahood.”
Next you equalize your attitude toward those who have been close to you in this life and those who have harmed you. From there you will cultivate an equanimous attitude toward all living beings.

“Since there is no beginning to samsara, there is no beginning to my series of lives. This implies that there is no place where it can be said that I have not taken birth and no single living being who has not been my mother. In fact beings have played that role countless times for me. It is simply because I have changed forms of life that I don’t recognize them but in fact among them all not one has failed to be my mother and father. Every time that they served as my parents, just as my father and mother of this life have cared for me, they showed me great kindness. How has my present mother manifested her benevolence to me? When I was still in her womb she was careful not to move roughly for fear that otherwise I might be harmed and generally she protected me. After I was born she placed me on a soft bed. She held me up and looked at me with loving eyes, greeted me with kind smiles, lovingly nourished me with her milk, held me to her warm body, fed me food with her tongue, cleaned my nose with her mouth, and wiped my dirt with her hand. She was more distressed at the thought of my falling slightly ill than at losing her own life. She gave me all the wealth and belongings that she never dared to use herself and that she gathered while neglecting her own suffering and happiness. In brief, to the best of her abilities my mother protected me from harm. What kindness she has shown me! How she has helped me!”

Ponder this until a great feeling of warmth rises in you.

Considering those close to you in this life, your parents and so on, then those who are indifferent to you and finally those who have harmed you in the present life, think,

“These people have been my mothers innumerable times. They’ve served as my mothers in human rebirths alone countless times and each time they protected me from harm as my present mother has done. They are so kind in the infinite ways they have provided me preparations for training on great beings’ paths, the main point is to train in the great beings’ path. It is necessary to proceed in this fashion because one must generate bodhicitta: the sole gateway to the great vehicle is the generation of the aspiration to supreme enlightenment. Prior to that you must increase your enthusiasm by reflecting on the advantages that generating the spirit of enlightenment bring. In brief these are of two kinds, immediate and long term. One immediate benefit of developing bodhicitta is that you easily gain the happiness of higher rebirths. The ultimate advantage of generating the spirit of enlightenment is realizing the state of omniscience. This is why you must cultivate it.

It must be preceded by great compassion that cannot bear the thought of all other living beings’ suffering. For this you first need a very strong desire to avoid your own suffering which you start to cultivate on the lower beings’ path. Contemplation of the way you suffer in the lower realms leads to the wish to avoid them. In the context of the intermediate beings’ path you reflect that even in high rebirths there is no genuine happiness, and thereby cultivate renunciation from cyclic existence as a whole. Thus it is based on your personal experience that you must generate love, compassion and the spirit of enlightenment, the wish to free all beings, your old mothers, from suffering. Consequently, training yourself on the paths shared with lesser and intermediate beings is by far the best method to train on the great beings’ path.

II. HOW ACTUALLY TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF [FREEDOM AND FORTUNE]

[1. TRAINING THE MIND ON THE PATH SHARED WITH LESSER BEINGS]

This is done in three steps. First, to train your mind on the path shared with lesser beings, you must concentrate yourself and think, “Even if I have attained a precious human rebirth so difficult to gain and so meaningful once achieved, it will not last long. I have to die and since it
is not sure when I will die, it is from now on that I must strive to use this life well. Until now countless being, good, bad and indifferent have been scattered by the Lord of Death as people disperse from a marketplace. I’m fortunate enough to have survived this long.” Generate the awareness of death until your heart thuds and you can’t keep still. You should reflect, “It amazing! Even though we don’t want to, we have to die and leave behind our wealth and belongings, our loved ones and companions; we only take with us the sins we have accumulated for their sake!”

Think, “Never mind what happens to the good things of this life -the food I like and the drinks I enjoy, all three: people, wealth and food. Now I will use whatever time I have left in this life to practise only the Dharma. Moreover I must do so as of today.”

It is said that nothing but the Dharma will be of any use when you die. You may wonder then which spiritual practices will serve you when you die? Which non-spiritual activities will be harmful? [Think], “When I die I won’t just disappear. I’ll have to take rebirth. There are only two possible kinds of rebirth -happy and miserable. In any case it is my karma that will decide. I have no free choice in the matter. I’ll have to be born wherever my black or white karma sends me. However if I die with a virtuous thought manifest in me I’ll be reborn in a happy realm. On the other hand if it is a non-virtuous thought that arises at the time then I’ll find myself in one of the three lower realms and will have to undergo horrendous suffering.” With regard to what sufferings the lower realms entail, the Protector Nāgārjuna said,

“Every day recall the hells,
Both extremely hot and extremely cold.
Also remember the hungry spirits
Emaciated from hunger and thirst.
Contemplate and recollect the beasts
With the many torments of ignorance.
Abandon the causes of these and produce the cause of happiness.
A human rebirth in Jambudvipa is difficult to obtain,

Buddhahood cannot be achieved for solely personal reasons. It necessarily involves a concern for the welfare of all living beings. Just as you are sunk in an ocean of misery, so too are living beings wretched, as they also are afflicted with suffering. There is not a single living being who has not been your father and mother, and this countless times. They have all cared for you lovingly. [Think]; “To free these kind beings from suffering and establish them in the unsurpassed state beyond sorrow without remains I shall generate the supreme aspiration to enlightenment.”

This will be done by means of the seven-point instruction, causes and effect. The seven are as follows:

(1) Recognizing all living beings as your mothers, (2) Recalling all their kindness, (3) Wanting to repay their kindness, (4) Seeing them all in a sympathetic light, (5) Love and compassion capable of inducing the superior intention, (6) The pure superior intention, and (7) The spirit of enlightenment from which omniscience arises.

These are the seven points. Prior to them you must meditate equanimity -an impartial attitude towards all living beings. If you fall into the trap of bias towards living beings, a true recognition of them all as your mothers will not arise. And even if you generate some love and compassion they will be partial, hence the importance of beginning with meditation on equanimity. This requires first visualizing before you numerous neutral beings who have neither helped nor harmed you in this life. Then meditate as follows,

“From their point of view we are equal in that we share the same wish to avoid suffer and the same desire for happiness. From my point of view they are all close to me having been my fathers and mothers. I shall remain balanced in my attitude toward them and avoid cherishing and helping some while keeping others at a distance and harming them.”
You cannot achieve liberation without producing its causes. Consequently, you must earnestly implement the three trainings that constitute the method to attain liberation. Because the other two trainings require a base, you must cultivate the higher training of moral discipline. Ignorance is the main reason why transgressions occur so with vigilance and remembrance watch yourself carefully and first guard yourself from committing transgressions. If they do occur, do not keep them long but instead confess them thoroughly. Meditate energetically the antidotes to your major kleshas to ensure that you are not tainted by transgressions and that nothing that you do is ever in conflict with our Guide’s teaching. In this way you will not yourself down.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

If you do not strive to reflect on the drawbacks of true suffering
No real aspiration to liberation will arise.
If you do not ponder the origins of suffering and how they
maintain you in samsara
You will not know how to cut samsara’s root.
Cultivate disgust and renunciation from samsara
And prize the awareness of what binds you to it.

Once you have as strong a thought to turn from all of samsara as the wish of a person engulfed in the flames of a burning house to escape from it, you have mastered training your mind on the path of intermediate beings.

3. Training the mind along the stages of the path of great beings

Although thanks to cultivating the three higher trainings you may achieve a state of personal liberation, this is insufficient. Although once liberated from samsara you may no longer have to wander in it, you have yet to completely discard your faults and achieve all good qualities. Having as yet to accomplish your personal aims, you are able only partially accomplish others’ goals. Consequently it is necessary to attain Buddhahood which allows for the completion of both goals.

Having attained one, channel all your energy
Into ending the causes of the lower realms.”

As explained in this work the hells, hot and cold, entail suffering that it is not possible to bear. The torments of hunger and thirst that hungry spirits undergo are also intolerable. Animals’ are subject to stupidity and ignorance and to mutually devouring one another -their woes too are impossible to endure. If you think now that plunging your hand into hot coals for a moment, remaining naked for about a day in the depths of winter, going without food or drink for a few days or being eaten alive by flies etc would be difficult to withstand how could you possibly put up with the sufferings of the hot and cold hells, of hungry spirits or of animals who eat one another alive? Basing your reflections on your personal experience meditate until your thinking is transformed and you are terrified.

What then are the methods one should strive to apply to avoid rebirth in the lower realms? As explained earlier, you generate fear of the lower realms’ suffering, and having truly understood that the three Jewels have the ability to protect you from that dread, from the depths of your heart you take refuge in the three precious Jewels. Indeed the three Jewels can protect you from terror of the lower realms. The Buddha Jewel has himself overcome all personal fears. He is skilled in guarding others from all dreads. His great compassion extends impartially to all. And he works for the welfare of all regardless of whether they have been helpful or not to him. For these reasons he is a suitable refuge. From his qualities you can extrapolate those of the Dharma and the Sangha. Since non-Buddhist teachers, doctrines and spiritual communities lack such qualities they are not fitting refuges. It is the three Jewels’ attributes which make them appropriate protectors.

Repeat,

“I take refuge in Buddha, supreme among bipeds. Pray serve as my guide to freedom from the fears of samsara and of the lower realms.”
I take refuge in the Dharma, supreme level of exclusion of attachment. Pray serve as the actual refuge freeing me from the fears of samsara and the lower realms. I take refuge in the Sangha, supreme among assemblies. Pray serve as assistants to freeing myself from the fears of samsara and the lower realms.”

In this way, from the depths of your heart, take refuge with total trust. Once you have taken refuge, if you fail to observe the precepts, your refuge practice will decline, consequently you must train in them.

Think, “Having taken refuge in the Buddha, I will not embrace powerful worldly gods such as Vishnu as my refuges. Moreover I will consider any images of the Buddha’s physical form as true buddhas and revere them. Having taken refuge in the Dharma I will not harm any living beings and putting aside disregard for so much as a single word of scripture I will respect it. Having taken refuge in the Sangha I will not make true friends of non-Buddhists and bad companions and I will avoid disrespecting all those who wear the saffron robes, whoever they are, instead I will honour them. Furthermore, once I have truly understood the great kindness of the three Jewels as the source of all goodness, happiness and virtue, I will present offerings to them - the first portion of my food and drink and so on. Seeing that all immediate and long term goals are achieved by supplicating the three Jewels I will refrain from counting on ordinary fortune-tellers and so on. I will do all that I can to encourage others to take refuge in the Jewels. I will not forsake the Jewels even at the cost of my life. I must be sure to not even let slip from my tongue words that express relinquishing them.”

Reflect upon this three times a day and three times a night. Similarly, from deep within you, take refuge three times during the day and three times during the night with the awareness of [the Jewels’] good qualities, of what distinguishes them, by profession and refusal of other refuges.

... of ways by the authorities. Or you hear unpleasant talk and so forth. These are sufferings of encountering that which you do not care for.

Then there is the suffering of unwanted separation from all that you care for, be it your loved ones or the food, wealth and so on that you have accumulated without regard for happiness, suffering or reputation.

As for the hardship of not achieving the goals you have set, for a householder this may consist in making an effort to farm only to see your crops fail due to drought, frost, hail and so on. When boating, you face difficulties with the wind and so on. If you are in trade you may lose your merchandise, or fail to make a profit. If you are ordained you may not succeed in upholding the ethic you have engaged in. These constitute the pain of failed aspirations.

Once you have taken birth with appropriated aggregates they constitute the basis for experiencing all the misery of this life - illness, ageing, death and so forth, and induce the trials of future lives. You are a vessel for [manifest] suffering, the suffering of change and have the nature of all pervasive suffering. In other terms the aggregates’ nature is exclusively that of suffering, devoid of even minor forms of happiness.

The demigods experience the extremely violent pain of having their bodies chopped, torn to pieces and so on. When the signs of death affect desire realm gods, their torment is greater than that of the hells. Moreover they suffer severely from intimidation, banishment and so on. Although the higher realm gods are not subject to manifest suffering like ordinary beings, nevertheless from the first up to the third dhyana they experience the suffering of change. Gods of the fourth dhyana and the formless realm levels have yet to overcome all pervasive suffering which is like having a continually aching boil. Hence there is a great need to achieve a state of liberation by which you reject all of samsaric suffering, general and particular.

11 Literally ‘kings’.
press. After delivery although you are placed on a very soft bed it hurts as much as being thrust into a mass of thorns. Thus the pain of birth that you experience is unbearable. Once born progressively grow up and before you know it you begin to age. Your back bends like a bow, your hair becomes as white as the trawa flower\textsuperscript{10}, your forehead like a cutting board is covered in lines. When you sit down it is as though a bag’s strap had snapped and rising is like tearing up roots. When you talk your speech is slurred and when you walk you stumble. Your eyes and ears no longer see and hear clearly. Your complexion declines and resembles a corpse’s. Your memory weakens and you become forgetful. Digestion becomes difficult and can no longer eat and drink what you please. Your life is almost over and you approach death. Such is the suffering of ageing.

When your body’s elements are unbalanced and disturbed, externally your skin dries, internally your flesh dissolves, you think good food and drink might make you sick and feel that you must give them up. Your are obliged to take distasteful food, drink and medicine, against your wishes. You must submit to harsh medical treatment like bloodletting, cauterization and so forth. Furthermore there is the fear that you may not get better. Such is the incalculable misery of illness that you must bear.

When struck down with a terrible mortal disease, you know that you are going to die. You regret the misdeeds that you committed in the past. You realize that you have wasted your life. You know that you are about to be separated from your body, your belongings, friends and relatives, entourage and servants. Your mouth dries up, your lip curls upward, your nostrils become pinched and your breathing becomes difficult. You are frightened at the prospect of the horrific torments of the lower realms. In this way you suffer the obligation to die against your wishes.

Furthermore at times you face encounters with terrible enemies like thieves and brigands and so lose all your food, wealth and so on. Or you may be struck by sharp weapons or clubs. You are penalized in a variety

\textsuperscript{10} Perhaps Aeschynomene grandiflora, a kind of tree

The three Jewels have the ability to protect you from the sufferings of the lower realms when you take refuge in them but you may wonder, what kinds of causes does you need to produce to attain a high rebirth? You must contemplate black and white karma, identify sinful and virtuous deeds individually, and reflect on the way karma grows, on the fact that you cannot experience the result of a karma you have not accomplished, and that once accomplished, karma does not go wasted. On this basis you should thoroughly reject ill deeds and accomplish virtue.

As this cannot be verified by direct reasoning, refer to [scriptures such as] the King of Concentrations [Sutra], which reads,

\begin{displayquote}
  "The moon and the stars may fall from their places,  
  Mountains, cities and the rest may disintegrate,  
  The space element may even take another form,  
  But You will never speak false words."
\end{displayquote}

Having cultivated profound faith in the form of conviction in relation to Buddha’s words, recall the following,

\begin{displayquote}
  "From non-virtue suffering arises,  
  Hence it is only right to think one thought  
  At all times, day and night:  
  ‘How can I free myself from it?’"
\end{displayquote}

And,

\begin{displayquote}
  "The root of all forms of goodness is faith [in law of karma],  
  This is what the Muni taught.  
  The root of this is to constantly meditate  
  The full maturation results [of one’s deeds]."
\end{displayquote}

In general you should reject all non-virtue. In particular reflect that the full maturation results of the ten physical, verbal and mental non-virtues, great, middling and small, are rebirths in the lower realms. Also contemplate the unpleasant effects concordant with the causes and that they produce environmental effects as well.
The Chapter on Truth says,

“Oh king, abstain from killing.
All kinds of living beings cherish their lives above all.
Hence if you wish to extend your life notably,
Though you may think many things, never consider killing.”

As explained here, thoroughly cultivate the intention to abstain, and do not let even the thought to do ill by killing and so forth arise in you. You must strive to accomplish all forms of virtue, abstention from taking life and so forth.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

There is no certainty that after death you will not be reborn in a lower realm.
The three Jewels can surely protect you from that fearful prospect.
Therefore fully rely upon refuge
And do not let your refuge precepts decline.
Successfully rejecting the one and accomplishing the other
Depends on thoroughly contemplating black and white karmas and their effects.

By observing the ethic of abstention from the ten non-virtues you will attain a good rebirth. However to realize supreme omniscience you also need to be born in a good family, with a nice physique and so on. In other words you need to ensure that you have the eight maturation qualities. These are caused by refraining from harming living beings, offering light and new clothes, overcoming pride and being respectful of others, etc. Relying on memory and understanding, you must apply this advice. Nevertheless, due to an abundance of disturbing mental factors, if you commit sins and transgressions, do not simply disregard them. Instead restore [your pledges] in a way that is adapted to the kind of transgression that you have committed. Confess your sins with all four remedial forces and strive to ensure that misdeeds and transgressions do not taint your three doors again.

To quote Jey Rinpoche,

Your efforts to achieve the supreme path will be vain
Unless you attain a form of life with all the attributes,
So strive to produce all their causes without exception.
For this it is essential to purify your karmic obstructions:
Your three doors polluted by sins and transgressions.
Hence take heed to rely continually on all four forces.

Once by meditating you have turned from preoccupation with this life and generated spontaneous concern for the excellence of future lives, your training on the path of lesser beings will have been successful.

2. TRAINING THE MIND ALONG THE STAGES OF THE PATH COMMON TO INTERMEDIATE BEINGS

Although by rejecting the ten non-virtues and adopting the ten virtues you may attain an excellent high rebirth, you nevertheless have yet to eliminate samsaric suffering. That is why it is necessary to attain liberation by which you overcome all the misery of samsara.

You may wonder, what is the nature of suffering at each level of samsara? For the three lower realms it is as explained above. In the present context however your reflections on these should be more thorough that before. After contemplating the woes of each lower realm separately you will conclude, “How could I possibly bear that kind of intense suffering for such a long period of time? I must do all that I can to free myself from the sufferings of samsara as exemplified by these.”

In fact, you are subject to samsara’s nature of suffering at all levels, high and low, and not just in the lower realms.

When you are born as a human, in your mother’s womb you suffer being in a dark, smelly and slimy place, etc. At delivery in the 38th week, pushed by the karmic wind, [at delivery] you suffer a torment similar to being forced through an extruding die or crushed like sesame seeds in a