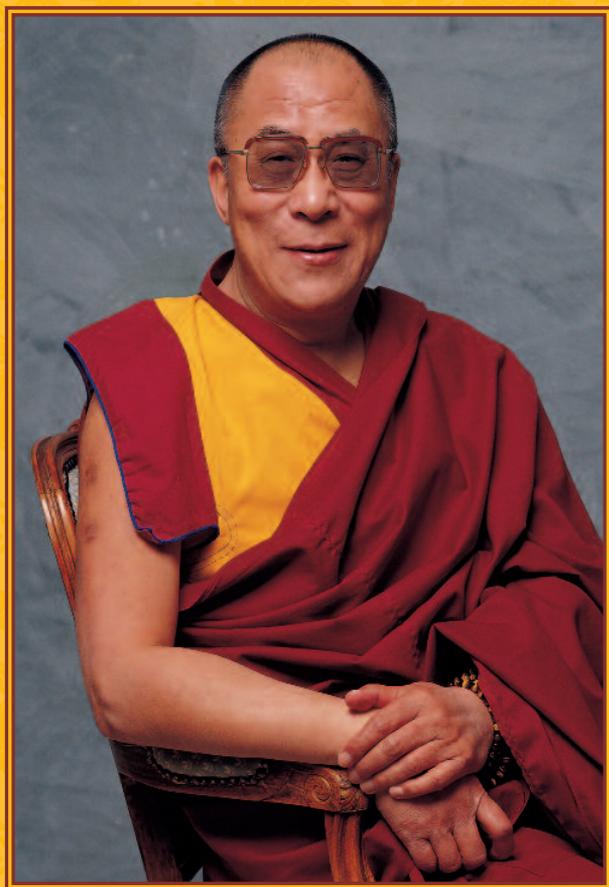


# THE WORLD OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

AN OVERVIEW OF  
ITS PHILOSOPHY  
AND PRACTICE



## THE DALAI LAMA

TRANSLATED, EDITED, & ANNOTATED BY GESHE THUPTEN JINPA

— FOREWORD BY RICHARD GERE —

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# THE WORLD OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

*An Overview of Its Philosophy and Practice*



THE WORLD OF  
TIBETAN BUDDHISM

*An Overview of Its Philosophy and Practice*

TENZIN GYATSO  
*the Fourteenth Dalai Lama*

*Translated, edited, and annotated by*  
GESHE THUPTEN JINPA

*Foreword by Richard Gere*



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WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON

WISDOM PUBLICATIONS  
199 Elm Street  
Somerville, Massachusetts 02144 USA  
[www.wisdompubs.org](http://www.wisdompubs.org)

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*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho, Dalai Lama XIV, 1935–

The world of Tibetan Buddhism : an overview of its philosophy and practice / Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama ; translated, edited, and annotated by Geshe Thupten Jinpa.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-86171-097-5 (pbk : alk. paper) :

ISBN 978-0-86171-968-6 (ebook)

1. Buddhism—China—Tibet. 2. Buddhism—Doctrines. I. Thupten Jinpa. II. Title.

BQ7610.B77 1994

294.3'923—dc20

94—30512

12 11 10 09 08

10 9

8th Printing

Cover photograph © Clive Arrowsmith 1994, courtesy of the Office of Tibet, London.

Cover design by TLrggms. Interior design by: Lj;Sawlit.  
Set in Adobe Garamond Font Family, Diacritical Garamond and Bullfinch.

Wisdom Publications' books are printed on acid-free paper and meet the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

Printed in the USA

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## FOREWORD

THE GERE FOUNDATION is honored to continue its sponsorship of important books by His Holiness the Dalai Lama published by Wisdom Publications, the first two in the series being *Opening the Eye of New Awareness* and *The Meaning of Life from a Buddhist Perspective*.

In the present volume, *The World of Tibetan Buddhism*, beautifully translated and edited by Geshe Thupten Jinpa, His Holiness offers a clear and penetrating overview of Tibetan Buddhist practice from the Four Noble Truths to Highest Yoga Tantra with, as always, special emphasis on the practices of love, kindness, and universal responsibility. He asks us to be mindful and present in the moment, to be constantly vigilant in monitoring our attitudes, actions, and motivations, and to engage in a thorough-going research on our own mental functioning and examine the possibility of making some positive changes within ourselves. Not easy tasks! Few of us are capable of the monumental courage and iron determination required to achieve the enlightened state of Śākyamuni, Nāgārjuna, Milarepa, or Tsongkhapa, or the other saints and heroes. But we can, with sustained practice, bring more clarity to our minds and feel the warmth of our opening hearts.

Recipient of the 1989 Nobel Prize for Peace, the Dalai Lama is universally respected as one of our greatest spiritual friends. He is the product of an unbroken lineage extending back 2,500 years to the historical Buddha. His forty-five years as a spiritual teacher and political leader are unique in our time. He has often said,

“My religion is kindness.”

Since the Chinese invasion of independent Tibet in 1950 and his harrowing escape to India in 1959, His Holiness has worked tirelessly to free his people from a systematic genocide that has killed 1.2 million Tibetans—one fifth of the pre-invasion population. His Holiness’s unfaltering compassion for even those who continue to destroy his country is the mark of a true and reliable bodhisattva. This book is a wondrous opportunity for us all to make contact with such a man and his teachings.

The Gere Foundation is proud to be associated with His Holiness and his message of universal responsibility and peace, and pleased to support Wisdom Publications in its efforts to promote these ideals. May this book help bring happiness and the causes of future happiness to all beings.

*Richard Gere*  
*New York*

## PREFACE

OVER A PERIOD of four days in the spring of 1988, His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave a series of lectures on Tibetan Buddhism in London organized by the Tibet Foundation, London. His lectures were, as usual, conducted in a personal and informal style that, nevertheless, in no way compromised the seriousness and the profundity of the subject matter. Looking back, I feel that those lectures marked an important turning point in His Holiness's method of teaching Buddhism to a modern audience. On that occasion, he put into full swing a novel but sophisticated system of presenting the Buddhist path. Based on four simple premises, that there is suffering, that it has an origin, that there is an end to suffering, and finally, that there is a method for ending suffering, His Holiness presents the entire superstructure of Tibetan Buddhism—its philosophy and practice—including the esoteric path of Vajrayana Buddhism. He beautifully demonstrates how all aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist path must and can be perceived as both emerging from and being firmly rooted in the framework of the Four Noble Truths. In short, His Holiness shows us with convincing explanation how Tibetan Buddhism is, in the true sense of the phrase, “complete Buddhism.” The result is a unique overview of Tibetan Buddhism that combines His Holiness's incisive, penetrating insight, profound reflective analysis, and deep spiritual experience, woven with a breathtaking scope of scholarship in all areas of Buddhist thought—all of this, of course, in a style that never fails to radiate a joyful exuberance of life and true affection toward all.

It has been a real joy to work on this project, and I am very happy that now others can also share in the experience. Many people have made significant contributions towards the success of this endeavor. I would like to thank Sally Ward for undertaking the difficult task of transcribing the tapes from the teachings, and Venerable Sarah Thresher, my first editor at Wisdom, for doing a second transcription with the necessary initial editing. I would also like to thank my editor at Wisdom, Venerable Connie Miller, for her valuable comments and criticisms, which contributed a great deal toward improving the English. My thanks also go to Vincent and especially Maria Montenegro and Robert Chilton for hours and hours of editing and research.

It has taken a long time for the lectures to appear in book form. As much as I had wished to see this teaching published, three years of study at Cambridge, England, between 1989 and 1992 delayed work on the manuscript. In retrospect, however, this delay has had a significant consequences in that when I finally had the time to work on the book, I was in a better position to appreciate the subtleties of many important English philosophical terms. For this, I am deeply grateful to the Inlaks Foundation, London, and my friends Geoff Jukes, Morna White, and Isabelle White, whose generosity made it possible for me to study at Cambridge.

In this book, I have attempted to adopt a style of translation that reflects, as faithfully as possible, His Holiness's thoughts as if he were expressing them in English. In this, I have had a ready guideline in His Holiness's own lectures as many of them have been at least partially given in English. These lectures often present a comprehensive overview of Tibetan Buddhism; correspondingly, I have tried to provide extensive footnotes and a bibliography for the benefit of those who wish to explore specific areas of Tibetan Buddhism in greater depth. For similar reasons, a glossary of important terms with their Tibetan and Sanskrit equivalents has been compiled. For their assistance in

providing Tibetan and Sanskrit transliteration equivalents, as well as checking the translation of textual citations, I would like to thank John Dunne, Sarah McClintock, David Reigle, Venerable Michael Roach, and Artemus Engle. I would also like to thank Sophie Boyer for reading the entire manuscript and providing a valuable lay perspective.

It is my sincere hope that this book will bring joy into the hearts of many people and a deeper appreciation of the richness of the Tibetan spiritual tradition.

*Geshe Thupten Jinpa  
Gaden, India*

## TECHNICAL NOTE

TIBETAN NAMES and terms that appear in the body of the text have been rendered phonetically. In the bibliography, the glossary, and in parenthetical references, Tibetan names and titles are romanized according to the system devised by Turrell Wylie (“A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 22, 1959, pp. 261–7), with the exception that the initial root letter of a name or title is capitalized. Sanskrit transliterations follow the standard, internationally recognized system. I have deliberately minimized the use of Tibetan and Sanskrit words within the main body of the text so as not to impede the flow of the presentation. The glossary lists the Tibetan (and occasionally the Sanskrit) terms that correspond to the English translation equivalents used herein. Titles of texts are italicized: sutras, tantras, and Tibetan commentarial materials are referred to by the English translation of their titles; Indian treatises are referred to by their Sanskrit title. All translations from scriptural sources are my own except where noted otherwise.

# THE WORLD OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

*An Overview of Its Philosophy and Practice*



## INTRODUCTION

**B**ROTHERS AND SISTERS, I am very happy to be here and to meet people who are taking a keen interest in the Buddhadharma. I can see many familiar faces in the audience and am very glad to have this opportunity to spend some time with you once more.

During the next three days, I will be speaking on Buddhist thought and practice according to the Tibetan tradition. My talks here will follow two main themes. As to the first [Parts 1 and 3], I will be giving a general introduction to the Buddhist path, a broad outline of the theories and practices of Tibetan Buddhism. I usually explain that the Buddhism of Tibet is perhaps the most complete form of Buddhism. It includes all the essential teachings of the various traditions of Buddhism that exist in different parts of the world today. Since many of you have received a number of tantric initiations and teachings, I think an overview of Tibetan Buddhism for the purpose of providing a comprehensive framework of the Buddhist path may prove helpful in deepening your understanding and practice of Dharma.

The second theme [Part 2] concerns the altruistic attitude that characterizes a bodhisattva. In drawing from Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (*Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*), I will offer some comments on important sections of the text, concentrating mainly on the practices of love, kindness, and compassion. Intimately related to these practices are the issues of how to cultivate tolerance as well as the appropriate attitudes one should adopt towards one's enemy.

During these first three days, instead of being the Dalai Lama

or Bhikṣu Tenzin Gyatso, I am Professor Tenzin Gyatso. On the fourth day, however, there will be a Green Tārā initiation, and on that day I will become Guru Bhikṣu Tenzin Gyatso!

As I mentioned earlier, a number of us here already know each other. Since our last meeting, many of us have led very busy lives. Whether we are doing something good and worthwhile with our lives or not, time never waits but keeps flowing. Not only does time flow unhindered, but correspondingly our life too keeps moving onward all the time. If something has gone wrong, we cannot turn back time and try again. In that sense, there is no genuine second chance. Hence, it is crucial for a spiritual practitioner constantly to examine his or her attitudes and actions. If we examine ourselves every day with mindfulness and mental alertness, checking our thoughts, motivations, and their manifestations in external behavior, a possibility for change and self-improvement can open within us. Although I myself cannot claim with confidence to have made any remarkable progress over the years, my desire and determination to change and improve is always firm. From early morning until I go to bed and in all situations of life, I always try to check my motivation and be mindful and present in the moment. Personally, I find this to be very helpful in my own life.

Over the three days we spend together, I shall be discussing various methods that we can employ as tools to examine ourselves, enabling us to embark upon a path of self-discovery and development. Taking your own body and mind as the laboratory, see if you can use these different techniques: that is to say, engage in some thorough-going research on your own mental functioning, and examine the possibility of making some positive changes within yourself. This is how a practicing Buddhist should perceive all the essential elements of the Buddha's teaching. There are also people here who, although not considering themselves practicing Buddhists, have a genuine desire to learn more about Buddhism in general, and the Buddhism of Tibet in particular.

This also includes those who, while practicing their own religion, take a keen interest in other spiritual traditions. I am certain that they can find within the Buddhist teachings various common concerns, such as meditation or contemplation on love and compassion, that can be incorporated into their own tradition and practice. Hence, such an ecumenical pursuit has great potential for benefit. Finally, there might be some people here who do not have any particularly strong feeling for spirituality but have come with honest curiosity and openness. These people can just sit and listen to my talks as one listens to a lecture. If, in the course of listening, you find something interesting, you can pay closer attention. Similarly, if there is nothing of much interest and value, you can take the session as a time for rest. However, if you do use it as rest time, please do so discreetly. Especially if you happen to doze off, do not start snoring, for you might disturb your neighbors!



PART I

# GENERAL BUDDHISM



## THE DIVISIONS OF THE VEHICLES

VARIOUS SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT and practice are mentioned in classical Buddhist literature.<sup>1</sup> Such systems are referred to as *yānas* or “vehicles.” There are, for instance, the various vehicles of humans and divine beings in addition to the Buddhist vehicles: the vehicle of individual liberation (*hīnayāna*), the vehicle of universal salvation (*mahāyāna*), and the vehicle of tantra (*vajrayāna*). In this context, vehicles of humans and divine beings refer to systems that outline the essential training and methods for both fulfilling the major aspirations of this life and, in addition, obtaining a favorable rebirth as either a human or a divine being. Such systems emphasize the importance of maintaining an ethically sound lifestyle—grounded in refraining from engaging in negative actions—since leading a life of righteousness and good behavior is perceived to be the most crucial factor for ensuring a favorable rebirth.

The Buddha also spoke of another category of vehicle, the Brahma Vehicle, comprising principally those techniques of meditation that aim at achieving the highest possible form of life within *samsara*, the karmically conditioned cycle of existence. Such meditative techniques include, among other things, withdrawing the mind from all external objects, which leads to a state of single-pointedness. The meditative states experienced as a result of having generated single-pointedness of mind are altered states of consciousness that, in terms of their phenomenological aspects and also their mode of engagement with objects, closely correspond to states of existence in the form and formless realms.<sup>2</sup>

From a Buddhist point of view, all these diverse systems are

worthy of respect since they all have the potential to bring about great benefit to a large number of sentient beings. However, this does not mean that all these systems are complete in themselves in presenting a path leading to full liberation from suffering and from the cycle of existence. Genuine freedom and liberation can only be achieved when our fundamental ignorance, our habitual misapprehension of the nature of reality, is totally overcome. This ignorance, which underlies all our emotional and cognitive states, is the root factor that binds us to the perpetual cycle of life and death in samsara. The system of thought and practice that presents a complete path towards liberation from this bondage is called the vehicle of the Buddha (*buddhayāna*).

Within the Buddha's Vehicle there are two major systems of thought and practice: the Individual Vehicle, or Hinayana, and the Universal Vehicle, or Mahayana. The former includes the Theravāda system, which is the predominant form of Buddhism in many Asian countries, such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, and others. In classical Buddhist literature, the Individual Vehicle is described as having two main divisions: the Hearers' Vehicle and the Solitary Realizers' Vehicle. A principal difference between the Individual Vehicle and the Universal Vehicle exists in their views on the Buddhist doctrine of selflessness and the scope of its application. The Individual Vehicle expounds the view of selflessness only in relation to person or personal identity but not in relation to things and events in general, whereas in the Universal Vehicle, the principle of selflessness is not confined to the limited scope of the person but encompasses the entire spectrum of existence, all phenomena. In other words, the Universal Vehicle system understands selflessness as a universal principle. Interpreted in this way, the principle of selflessness acquires greater profundity. According to the Universal Vehicle teachings, it is only when a practitioner's experience of selflessness is rooted in this universal interpretation that the experience will bring about the elimination of the delusions and their underlying states of

ignorance. It is by eliminating these underlying states of ignorance that we are able to cut off the root of samsara. Furthermore, a profound experience of selflessness can also lead, ultimately, to full enlightenment, a state of total freedom from the subtle imprints and the obstructive habitual tendencies created by our misconception of the nature of reality. The system of thought and practice which presents such a view of selflessness is called Mahayana, the Universal Vehicle.

The Tantric Vehicle, or Vajrayana, which is considered by the Tibetan tradition to be the highest vehicle, is included within the Universal Vehicle. In addition to meditative practices for enhancing one's realization of emptiness and *bodhicitta*,<sup>3</sup> this system also includes certain advanced techniques for utilizing the various elements of the physical body in one's meditative practice. Such feats are accomplished on the basis of sophisticated yogic practices that principally involve mentally penetrating the essential points within the body where the *cakras*, or energy centers, are located. By means of this subtle and refined coordination of mind and body, the practitioner is able to accelerate the process of getting at the root of ignorance and completely overcoming its effects and imprints, a process that culminates, finally, in the realization of full enlightenment. This feature—of engaging in meditative practices involving the subtle coordination of both mental and physiological elements within the practitioner—is unique to the Tantric Vehicle.

I shall now briefly explain the historical background of Buddhism as we now know it. According to the Kashmiri pandit Śākya Śrī, who came to Tibet in the early thirteenth century, the Buddha was born in India about 2,500 years ago. This accords with the standard position of the Theravāda tradition, but according to some Tibetan scholars, the Buddha appeared in the world more than 3,000 years ago.<sup>4</sup> There is also a third opinion that dates the Buddha's birth to sometime in the eighth century B.C.E. When reflecting on these conflicting opinions regarding what is

perhaps the most crucial date in Buddhist history, sometimes I feel that it is quite embarrassing that still no consensus exists on the key question of when the teacher Śākyamuni Buddha actually lived! I seriously think that it would be helpful if, with due respect, scientific tests were carried out on the various relics that are believed to be genuine relics of the Buddha. These relics can be found in countries like India, Nepal, and Tibet. Perhaps scientific experiments on those relics using sophisticated modern technology and chemicals could establish with greater accuracy the dates of the Buddha's existence. This would be very helpful. In the past, erudite Buddhists tried to prove their own version of the historical facts surrounding the Buddha's life mainly through logic and argumentation. Given the nature of the question, however, I think such types of proof can never be conclusive.

Despite conflicting assertions regarding the historical reckoning of his birth, there is a general consensus in the literature as to the key events of the Buddha's life. We know that the Buddha was originally an ordinary person like ourselves, with all the basic faults and weaknesses of a human being. He was born into a royal family, married, and had a son. Later, however, he came into contact with the unsatisfactory suffering nature of life in the form of unexpected encounters with people afflicted by sickness, old age, and death. Deeply disturbed by these sights, the prince eventually left the palace and renounced his comfortable and sheltered princely way of life. His initial reaction to these experiences was to adopt the austere lifestyle of an ascetic, engaging in a spiritual path involving great physical penances. Later, he discovered that the true path out of suffering lies in a middle way between the extremes of strict asceticism and self-indulgent luxury. His single-minded spiritual pursuit ultimately resulted in his full awakening, or enlightenment: buddhahood.

I feel that the story of the Buddha's life holds great significance for us. It exemplifies the tremendous potentials and capacities that are intrinsic to human existence. For me, the events that led to his

full enlightenment set an appropriate and inspiring example for his followers. In short, his life makes the following statement: “This is the way that you should pursue your spiritual path. You must bear in mind that the attainment of enlightenment is not an easy task. It requires time, will, and perseverance.” Therefore, right from the beginning, it is crucial to harbor no illusions of a swift and easy path. As a spiritual trainee, you must be prepared to endure the hardships involved in a genuine spiritual pursuit and be determined to sustain your effort and will. You must anticipate the multiple obstacles that you are bound to encounter along the path and understand that the key to a successful practice is never to lose your determination. Such a resolute approach is very important. The story of the Buddha’s personal life, as we have seen, is the story of someone who attained full enlightenment through hard work and unwavering dedication. It is ironic that sometimes we seem to believe that we, who are following in the footsteps of the Buddha, can somehow realize full enlightenment with greater ease and less effort.



## THE FIRST TURNING OF THE WHEEL OF DHARMA

### THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

ACCORDING TO POPULAR LEGEND, following his full enlightenment the Buddha remained silent and did not give any teachings for forty-nine days. The first public teaching he gave was to the five ascetics who had been his colleagues when he was leading the life of a mendicant. Having realized that asceticism does not lead to freedom from suffering, the Buddha—then called Siddhārtha Gautama—had given up his penances and parted company with his fellows. His five colleagues had resented what they saw as a betrayal and vowed never to associate with him. For them, this change in Siddhārtha had indicated a failure to sustain his commitment to the life of asceticism. However, when they met him after his enlightenment, they felt spontaneously drawn toward him. It was to these five former colleagues that the Buddha gave his first public teaching at Deer Park in Sarnath.<sup>5</sup>

In this discourse, which became known as the first turning of the wheel of Dharma,<sup>6</sup> the Buddha taught the principles of the Four Noble Truths. As most of you might know, these Four Truths are the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path leading to this cessation.

According to the sutra concerning the first turning, when the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths, he taught them within the context of three factors: the nature of the truths themselves,

their specific functions, and their effects, or complete attainment. The first factor describes the nature of the individual truths. The second explains the importance of comprehending the specific significance of each for the practitioner: namely, suffering must be recognized, and its origin, eliminated; and the cessation of suffering must be actualized, and the path to cessation, realized. In the context of the third factor, the Buddha explained the ultimate result, or complete attainment, of the Four Noble Truths—that is, the completed recognition of suffering, the completed abandonment of the origin of suffering, the completed realization of the cessation of suffering, and the completed actualization of the path to cessation. I personally find the teaching on the Four Noble Truths to be very profound. This teaching lays down the blueprint for the entire body of Buddhist thought and practice, thus setting up the basic framework of an individual's path to enlightenment. I shall elaborate on this further.

What we desire and seek is to have happiness and overcome suffering. This yearning to have happiness and avoid pain and suffering is innate to all of us and needs no justification for its existence or validity. However, happiness and suffering do not arise from nowhere. They arise as consequences of causes and conditions. In brief, the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths states the principle of causality. Keeping this crucial point in mind, I sometimes remark that all of Buddhist thought and practice can be condensed into the following two principles: (1) adopting a world view that perceives the interdependent nature of phenomena, that is, the dependently originated nature of all things and events, and (2) based on that, leading a non-violent and non-harming way of life.

Buddhism advocates the conduct of non-violence on the basis of two simple and obvious premises: (1) as sentient beings, none of us wants suffering, and (2) suffering originates from its causes and conditions. The Buddhist teachings further assert that the root cause of our pain and suffering lies in our own ignorant and

undisciplined state of mind. Therefore, if we do not desire suffering, the logical step to take is to refrain from destructive actions, which naturally lead to consequent experiences of pain and suffering. Pain and suffering do not exist in isolation; they come about as the results of causes and conditions. It is in understanding the nature of suffering and its relation to causes and conditions that the principle of dependent origination plays a crucial role. In essence, the principle of dependent origination states that an effect is dependent upon its cause. So, if you don't want the result, you should strive to put an end to its cause.

Within the Four Truths, we find two distinct sets of cause and result operating: suffering is the result, and the origin of suffering is its cause; in like manner, the true cessation of suffering is peace, the result, and the path leading to it is the cause of that peace.

The happiness we seek, a genuine lasting peace and happiness, can be attained only through the purification of our minds. This is possible if we cut the root cause of all suffering and misery—our fundamental ignorance. This freedom from suffering, the true cessation, can come about only when we have successfully seen through the illusion created by our habitual tendency to grasp at the intrinsic existence of phenomena and, thereby, gained insight that penetrates into the ultimate nature of reality. To attain this, however, the individual must perfect the three higher trainings.<sup>7</sup> The training in insight, or wisdom, acts as the actual antidote to ignorance and its derivative delusions. However, it is only when training in higher insight is conjoined with a highly developed faculty of single-pointedness of the mind that all of one's energy and mental attention can be focused on a chosen object of meditation without distraction. Hence, the training in higher concentration is an indispensable factor in advanced stages of application of the wisdom gained through insight. However, in order for both the trainings in higher concentration and higher insight to be successful, the

practitioner must first establish a stable foundation of morality by adopting an ethically sound way of life.

### THE THREE HIGHER TRAININGS

Just as there are three types of higher trainings: in ethics, concentration, and wisdom, the Buddhist scriptures fall into three main divisions: discipline, sets of discourses, and metaphysical knowledge. When one is able to undertake a genuine practice of these three trainings, based on the study of the three scriptural collections, and to impart the same to others, it can truly be said that one is upholding the Buddhadharma. The need to engage in these three higher trainings is equal for both men and women. In terms of the importance of study and practice, no distinctions can be made among practitioners on the basis of gender. However, there are certain differences in the monastic rules of ethical training depending on the gender of the practitioner.

The basic foundation of the practice of morality is to refrain from ten unwholesome actions: three pertaining to the body, four pertaining to speech, and three pertaining to thought.

The three physical non-virtues are: (1) killing: intentionally taking the life of a living being, whether a human being, an animal, or even an insect; (2) stealing: taking possession of another's property without his or her consent, regardless of its value; and (3) sexual misconduct: committing adultery. The four verbal non-virtues are: (4) lying: deceiving others through spoken word or gesture; (5) divisiveness: creating dissension by causing those in agreement to disagree or those in disagreement to disagree further; (6) harsh speech: verbally abusing others; and (7) senseless speech: talking about foolish things motivated by desire and so forth. The three mental non-virtues are: (8) covetousness: desiring to possess something that belongs to someone else; (9) harmful intent: wishing to injure others, whether in a great or small way; and (10) wrong view: holding that such things as rebirth, the law of cause and effect, or the Three Jewels<sup>8</sup> do not exist. The

morality practiced by a spiritual trainee in the context of explicitly adopting a certain ethical way of life in the form of precepts is known as the discipline of individual liberation, or *prātimokṣa*.

In terms of the nature and specific enumeration of the precepts, four major traditions emerged in ancient India and later branched into eighteen sub-schools.<sup>9</sup> Each of the four main branches had its own version of the *Individual Liberation Sutra* (*Prātimokṣasūtra*)—the traditional record of the Buddha’s disciplinary advice that enumerates the ethical precepts and lays down the basic guidelines for a monastic life. The system of monasticism and its underlying ethical rules practiced in the Tibetan tradition is that of Mūlasarvāstivādin school. According to the *Individual Liberation Sutra* of this school, which is in Sanskrit, there are 253 precepts for a fully ordained monk and 364 for a fully ordained nun. This differs from the Theravāda tradition in which the Pali version of the *Individual Liberation Sutra* lists 227 precepts for a monk and 311 for a nun.

The practice of morality—guarding your three doors of body, speech, and mind from indulging in unwholesome activities—equips you with mindfulness and conscientiousness. These two faculties help you avoid gross forms of negative physical and verbal actions, deeds that are destructive for both oneself and others. Therefore, morality is the foundation of the Buddhist path.

The second phase is meditation, or training in higher concentration. When we talk about meditation in the general Buddhist sense, there are two principal types—absorptive and analytical. The first, absorptive meditation, refers primarily to the meditative states of tranquil abiding and the various meditative practices integrally associated with this state.<sup>10</sup> The main characteristics of this type of meditation are the feature of single-pointedness of mind and the absorptive quality that it generates. Analytical meditation, on the other hand, refers to meditative states that are more probing in terms of their mode of engagement with the object of meditation. It also includes the practices that are not

characterized by mere single-pointedness of mind but are primarily associated with deeper analysis. Nevertheless, in both cases it is vital to have a stable foundation of mindfulness and alertness—faculties that originate, as we have seen, from a sound practice of ethical discipline. Even on the mundane level of our everyday life, the importance of mindfulness and alertness should not be underestimated.

To summarize, when we engage in the practice of morality, we lay the foundation for mental and spiritual development. When we engage in the complementary practice of concentration, we make the mind serviceable for and receptive to this higher purpose and prepare the mind for subsequent higher training in insight, or wisdom. With the faculty of single-pointedness that arises from concentration, we are able to channel all of our attention and mental energy towards a chosen object. Then, on the basis of a very stable state of mind, you can generate genuine insight into the ultimate nature of reality. Such penetrative insight into selflessness is the sole direct antidote to ignorance, as it alone is capable of eradicating our fundamental misknowing, or ignorance, together with the various deluded cognitive and afflictive emotional states arising from it.

### THE THIRTY-SEVEN ASPECTS OF THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

The general structure of the Buddhist path is outlined in the first turning of the wheel of Dharma in terms of the thirty-seven aspects of the path to enlightenment. They are divided into seven categories. First are *the four mindfulnesses*, referring to mindfulness of body, feelings, mind, and phenomena.<sup>11</sup> *Mindfulness* here refers to contemplative practices that focus on the fundamentally unsatisfactory nature of samsara and on the transitoriness of this conditioned existence, the perpetual cycles of our habitual patterns of thought and behavior. It is by means of such reflections that the practitioner develops a true determination to become free from the cycle of conditioned existence.

Next are *the four complete abandonments*. These are so named because as practitioners develop a heart-felt determination to be free through their practice of the four mindfulnesses, they engage in a way of life in which they abandon the causes of future suffering and cultivate the causes of future happiness. Hence, the four abandonments are: (1) abandonment of unwholesome thoughts and actions already generated; (2) non-generation of unwholesome thoughts and actions not yet generated; (3) enhancement of wholesome thoughts and actions already generated; and (4) generation of wholesome thoughts and actions not yet generated.

Since you can overcome negative actions and their motivating afflictive emotions and increase the positive factors in your mind—technically called the class of pure phenomena—it is only when your mind is very concentrated that there follow what are known as *the four factors of miraculous powers*. These four factors are related to the practice of developing one’s faculty of single-pointedness. They are also known as the four “legs” because they are the prerequisite factors that enable a practitioner to achieve the single-pointed states of mind that serve as the bases for supernatural manifestations. These four are the miraculous powers of aspiration, effort, intention, and analysis.

The fourth category consists of *the five faculties*, and the fifth category, of *the five powers*. In both categories, the list is identical: confidence, joyous effort, mindfulness, single-pointedness, and intelligence. In the present context, the distinction between a faculty and a power depends upon the practitioner’s level of fluency in that particular skill; at a sufficiently advanced stage of fluency, a faculty becomes a power.

Next come *the seven branches of the path to enlightenment*: perfect mindfulness, perfect analysis, perfect effort, perfect joy, perfect pliancy, perfect meditative stabilization, and perfect equanimity.

The seventh and final category is *the noble eightfold path*: right

view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditative stabilization.

This, then, is the general structure of the Buddhist path as put forth in the first turning of the wheel of Dharma by the Buddha. Buddhism as practiced in the Tibetan tradition completely incorporates all these features of the Buddhist doctrine.