

Heart Treasure for the Warriors Who Long for Liberation

by Atiśa Dīpaṅkara

When Lord Atiśa first went to Ngari, he stayed for two years and, while there, granted a wealth of teachings to Lha Changchub Ö and others. He then thought to return to India, and as he prepared to depart, Lha Changchub Ö requested him to give a final piece of advice. Lord Atiśa replied that what he had taught in the past was enough, but Lha insisted, pleading with him, and so Lord Atiśa imparted these words of advice.

How wondrous! Dear friends of high knowledge and pure, noble intent,
Though I, a trifling and unintelligent man, am unfit to give you advice,
Precious supreme friends, more dear than my heart itself, you entreat me thus,
And so I, this foolish little man, offer these thoughts to your noble minds.

Friends, until you reach awakening you need a guru, so follow a sublime spiritual friend.

Until you realize the natural state you need to receive teachings, so listen to the guru's instructions.

You won't become buddhas through mere knowledge of the Dharma. Knowledge is not enough; you must practice!

Avoid places that disturb your mind, and always stay in places that enhance virtue.

Until you gain stability, hustle and bustle is detrimental, so hold fast to isolated forest retreats.

Avoid companions who stir up the afflictions; keep company with those who encourage virtue, and cherish them.

Work and tasks will never end, so put projects aside and be still.

Dedicate all your virtue, day and night, and keep constant guard over your mind.

It is a pith instruction to follow the words of the guru, so do whatever he tells you, be it meditation or anything else.

Apply yourself to the guru's instructions with great devotion, and before long results will emerge on their own.

If you practice Dharma wholeheartedly, food and clothing will always find you – that's how it goes.

Dear friends, be content, for desire is like salt water; drinking it only makes you thirst for more.

Do away with conceit, arrogance, pretense, and pride, and make yourselves humble and tamed.

So-called meritorious busyness is an obstacle for Dharma practice, so give it up.

Honor and gain are the traps of Māra, so cast them away like stones from a weighing

scale.

Words of praise and fame will lead you astray, so toss them aside like revolting lumps of snot.

Comfort, joy, and caring friends – you might have them all now, but they’ll fade soon enough, so leave them behind.

Your future lives are much longer than this one, so prepare your provisions for the future and bury your treasure now!

All is lost in the end, so strive not and cling to naught.

Arouse compassion for the needy and never ignore them, nor treat them with disdain.

Rid yourself of bias and prejudice toward enemies and rival clans.

Do not envy those with talent and learning; rouse respect, and learn from them.

Look not at others’ faults but at your own, and rid yourself of them as you would infected blood.

Think not of your own but of others’ virtue, and treat everyone with respect, as a servant would.

Regard all beings as your parents, and care for them with the love of a child.

Keep a smile on your face and love in your heart, and speak frankly, free from anger.

Irrelevant chatter will lead to confusion, so speak in a measured, appropriate way.

Pointless activity will interrupt your spiritual practice, so set aside all deeds that are not Dharma.

Don’t exert yourself in meaningless work; such efforts will only tire you out.

Due to karma and external circumstances you may not accomplish what you have set out to do. Thus it is better to relax and let be, and you will be happy and at ease.

Displeasing a noble being is as grave as death itself; thus don’t do things that you will regret but be a trustworthy and honest person.

The pleasure and pain of this life stem from your own past karma, so don’t lay blame elsewhere.

All happiness is the guru’s blessing, so strive to repay his kindness and grace.

Until you tame your own mind, you cannot tame others’, so first tame yourself.

If you lack clairvoyance you can’t ripen others, so exert yourself in practice.

When you die, all your wealth is sure to be left behind, so don’t go amassing sins for the sake of wealth.

It is futile to lose yourself to luxury and wealth. Instead, adorn yourself with the glory of giving.

It will bring beauty in this life and bliss in the next, so maintain a pure and constant discipline.

In these degenerate times aggression is on the rise, so don the armor of patience, free from aggression.

It is our laziness that keeps us here, so rekindle your efforts in practice like a blazing pyre.

Our lives run out in constant distraction, so now let us train in meditation.

Swayed by wrong views, we fail to realize the natural state, so let us examine the genuine nature of things.

Dear friends, here in the swamp of saṃsāra there is no happiness, so let us journey to the dry shore of liberation.

Train correctly in the guru's instructions; dry up the ocean of saṃsāra's suffering.

Take these words to heart: they are spoken sincerely and so are worthy of attention.

If you do so, you will bring joy to me, and happiness to yourself and others too.

I humbly request you to take heed of these instructions that I, this foolish man, have given.

Thus Lord Atiśa spoke to the venerable Changchub Ö.

Whatever wholesome virtue is created by this,

I dedicate it to the fulfillment of all the aspirations made

By the sugatas of the three times, and their heirs,

And as a cause for upholding the sacred Dharma of scripture and realization!

*Sarva maṅgalam!*¹

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Bibliography

Tibetan Edition

Atiśa. "mnyam med jo bo chen po rgya gar du phebs khar lha byang chub 'od la zhal gdams su stsal ba thar 'dod dpa' bo'i snying nor zhes bya ba bzhugs so." In *zhal gdams phyogs bsgrigs*. BDRC W4CZ45286. 1a–4a (pdf pp. 3–10).

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1. The Sanskrit translates as: May all be auspicious! ←



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