

A Prayer to Lord Atiśa and His Spiritual Sons

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By Khenpo Ngawang Palzang
Translated by Dr. Joseph McClellan



༄༅། །ཇོ་བོ་ཡབ་སྤྲུལ་ལ་གསོལ་འདེབས།

A PRAYER TO LORD ATIŚA AND HIS SPIRITUAL SONS

By Khenpo Ngawang Palzang

ན་མོ་རྩྭ་ཏྲ་ཡ་ཡ།

Namo ratnatrayaya!

ཀྱུ་ལ་སྲིད་སྤངས་ནས་དཀའ་བ་བརྒྱ་ཕྱག་གིས། །

སྤྱི་མ་བརྒྱ་དང་ལྔ་བཅུ་ཙུ་བདུན་བརྟེན། །

ཤེས་བྱ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཡང་དག་ཐུགས་སྙུ་ཁྱད། །

ཀྱུ་ལ་བ་གཉིས་པར་གྱུར་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས། །

Having abandoned your kingdom,¹ taking on hundreds of hardships,
You took the support of 157 gurus.²
Everything there is to know, you perfectly mastered.
Second Buddha,³ to you I pray!

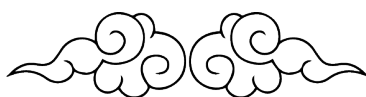
ཀྱུ་ལ་བའི་མདུན་ན་ཀྱུ་ལ་སྤྲུལ་བཟང་པོ་སྟོང། །

ཁ་བ་ཅན་དུ་དཔལ་ལྡན་མར་མི་མཇོད། །

དཀའ་ལྡན་གནས་སྙུ་ནམ་མཁའ་ངི་མ་མེད། །

ཡིད་བཞིན་ཞོར་བྱ་བྱིད་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས། །

In the Victor's presence, you nurture⁴ your noble spiritual sons.⁵
Glorious Illuminator⁶ of the Land of Snows,
Stainless Sky in Tuṣita,⁷
Wish-fulfilling jewel, to you I pray!



སྒྲོལ་མས་ལུང་བསྟན་རྒྱལ་བུ་དགོན་མཆོག་འབངས། །
 ཐུབ་བསྟན་ཡོངས་སུ་རྫོགས་པའི་མངའ་བདག་མཆོག། །
 ལྷ་ཆོས་བདུན་ལྡན་ཇོ་བོ་བཀའ་གདམས་པའི། །
 རྒྱལ་བའི་འབྲུང་གནས་བྱིད་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས། །
 རྒྱལ་ཆབ་དབང་བསྐྱར་ར་སྤྱིང་དཔལ་གྱི་གནས། །
 རྒྱུད་པ་བདུན་ལྡན་ཇོ་བའི་མན་ངག་གིས། །
 ཞིང་འདིར་རྩེ་སྤྲིག་འཛིན་པས་མཛེས་པར་བྱས། །
 གངས་ཅན་མགོན་པོ་བྱིད་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས། །

[Dromtönpa⁸]

Prince Könchok Bang,⁹ prophesied by Tārā,
 Sublime master of all the Sages's teachings,
 Gyalwe Jungne,¹⁰ victorious source of the Jowo Kadampa teachings¹¹
 Brimming with the sevenfold divinity and doctrine,¹² to you I pray!
 Invested as the regent of the glorious site of Reting,
 You beautified it with the pith instructions of the Jowo steeped in the seven lineages,¹³
 And by dressing this realm in saffron robes.¹⁴
 Protector of the Land of Snows, to you I pray!

དད་གུས་ཏིང་འཛིན་སྦྱོང་པའི་གཞུང་རྒྱལ་ལ། །
 ཐོས་བསམ་སྦྱོང་པས་བཤད་སྐྱབ་བྱུང་བུ་འབྲེལ། །
 བཀའ་གདམས་གཞུང་པ་ཞེས་བྲགས་ཕུ་ཏོ་བ། །
 འཇམ་དཔལ་གཞོན་ནུ་བྱིད་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས། །

[Putowa]

You united theory and practice by studying, contemplating, and practicing
 The six books associated with faith, respect, meditation, and conduct.¹⁵



Renowned as the encyclopedia of Kadam—Putowa,
Youthful Mañjuśrī, to you I pray! [148]

ཤེས་རབ་པ་རོལ་ཕྱིན་པའི་མངོན་རྟོགས་ཀྱན། །

བདེན་པ་བཞིའི་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་ཡི། །

གདམས་པའི་ཉམས་སྤྱོད་བརྒྱད་འཛིན་སྤྱན་ལྔ་བ། །

ཐུགས་རྩེ་ཆེན་པོ་ཁྱོད་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས། །

[Chen-ngawa]

Holder of the experience lineage in the instructions¹⁶

For all the manifest realizations of the perfection of wisdom¹⁷

And the graduated path of the four truths—Chen-ngawa,

Great Compassionate One,¹⁸ to you I pray!

མན་ངག་གསང་བ་ཐིག་ལེ་བཅུ་དྲུག་གིས། །

ངོ་མཚར་བརྒྱད་པ་བདུན་ལྔ་ནསྟོལ་མཛད་པ། །

རྟོན་འབྲེལ་དབང་འབྱོར་དག་བཤེས་ལུ་རྒྱུང་བ། །

གསང་བའི་བདག་པོ་ཁྱོད་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས། །

[Puchungwa¹⁹]

With the secret oral instruction of the sixteen drops²⁰

You blazed a trail²¹ for the wondrous sevenfold lineage.²²

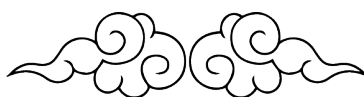
Master of interdependence,²³ spiritual friend Puchungwa,

Lord of Secrets,²⁴ to you I pray!

སྐྱ་མཆེད་གསུམ་ལས་རིམ་པར་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡི། །

གཞུང་གདམས་མན་ངག་བསྟན་པ་གྲུ་བཞི་ཏུ། །

འགལ་མེད་སྐྱེས་བུ་གསུམ་གྱི་ཉམས་ལེན་གྱི། །



བཀའ་གདམས་བརྒྱད་པའི་བཤེས་གཉིན་དམ་པ་རྣམས། །

གསོལ་བ་འདེབས་སོ་ཐུགས་རྩིས་བྱིན་གྱིས་རྫོབས། །

From the Three Brothers,²⁵ the Kadam lineage
Of the three scopes,²⁶ harmonious practices,
Gradually spread on the four bases of treatise, instruction, pith instruction, and
exegesis.²⁷

Holy spiritual friends of this lineage—

I pray to you! Please grace me with your compassion!

མི་ཆེ་ལོས་འཇད་ལོ་རྒྱ་ཞག་གིས་འཇད། །

སྐད་ཅིག་མི་སྡོད་འཆི་བའི་ཆོས་ཉིད་ལ། །

རྟག་འཇོན་ཆེ་འདིའི་འབྲི་བ་སྐྱེ་བའི་ཆོ། །

གསོལ་བ་འདེབས་སོ་རྒྱལ་བ་ཡབ་སྲས་གཉིས། །

བྱིན་གྱིས་རྫོབས་ཤིག་དག་བཤེས་སྐྱེ་མཆིད་གསུམ། །

བཀའ་གདམས་བརྒྱད་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཐུགས་རྩིས་བྱངས། །

Life runs out year by year. Years and months slip away day by day.

Not a moment lasts. It is the nature of things to die.

When I want things to last forever, when I'm tangled in this life,

I pray to you, victorious father and son!²⁸

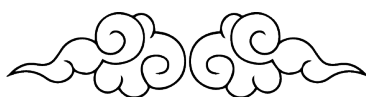
Please bless me, Three Brothers, my spiritual friends!²⁹

Masters of the Kadam lineage, please hold me in your compassion!

གར་འཆི་ངས་མེད་གར་འཆིའི་རྒྱུ་མ་ངས། །

སྙེད་འགྲོགས་ཀྱང་འཆི་བའི་ངང་རྒྱལ་ཅན། །

འབྱོར་རྒྱུ་མཐོ་མན་འཆི་ལས་མ་འདས་ཀྱང། །



འཆི་མེད་ལྷ་བཞིན་གཡངས་བས་འབྱུང་བའི་ཆོ། །

གསོལ་བ་འདེབས་སོ་རྒྱལ་བ་ཡབ་སྲས་གཉིས། །

བྱིན་གྱིས་སློབས་ཤིག་དག་བཤེས་སྐྱེ་མཆེད་གསུམ། །

བཀའ་གདམས་བརྒྱད་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་བྱུགས་རྗེས་བྱངས། །

No one knows where they will die, and how ones dies is not set in stone.
No matter who keeps me company, I am marked for death.³⁰ [149]
Rich or poor, high or low, no one escapes their demise.
When I am confused from letting my mind wander like an immortal god,
I pray to you, victorious father and son!
Please bless me, Three Brothers, my spiritual friends!
Masters of the Kadam lineage, please hold me in your compassion!

འཆི་བའི་དུས་ན་ཡ་མ་ཕུ་རུ་དང་། །

གྲོགས་དང་ལོངས་སྤྱོད་དག་གཉིན་རྗེས་མི་འབྲང་། །

ངས་པར་ཕན་གནོད་དག་སྤྲིག་གཉིས་ལས་མེད། །

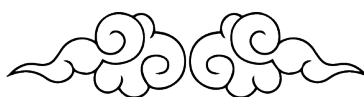
དོན་མེད་ཆོས་མིན་བྱ་བའི་བྲེལ་བའི་ཆོ། །

གསོལ་བ་འདེབས་སོ་རྒྱལ་བ་ཡབ་སྲས་གཉིས། །

བྱིན་གྱིས་སློབས་ཤིག་དག་བཤེས་སྐྱེ་མཆེད་གསུམ། །

བཀའ་གདམས་བརྒྱད་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་བྱུགས་རྗེས་བྱངས། །

When death calls, my father, mother, siblings, companions,
Enjoyments, enemies, and friends will not come with me.
I know that help and harm only stem from my positive and negative actions;
So when I am caught up in pointless activities that take me away from Dharma,
I pray to you, victorious father and son!
Please bless me, Three Brothers, my spiritual friends!
Masters of the Kadam lineage, please hold me in your compassion!



སྐྱབས་གྱི་མཐར་ཐུག་བསྐྱེད་དགོན་མཆོག་གསུམ། །

ཡིད་ཆེས་དད་པས་སྐྱབས་སུ་ལེགས་བརྟེན་ནས། །

རྒྱ་འབྲས་ཕྱ་མེད་སྤང་སྤང་མ་ནོར་བ། །

སྐྱེས་བུ་གསུམ་གྱི་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བདུན། །

རྟོགས་ནས་ཚུལ་བཞིན་འཇུག་པར་བྱིན་གྱིས་རྫོབས། །

Undeceiving Three Jewels—my ultimate sources of refuge—
I take shelter wholeheartedly in their protection,
And I do not err in the subtleties of what to do and not do in light of cause and effect.
Once I have understood the seven stages of the three scopes' paths,³¹
Please bless me to apply them in the right way!

མང་དུ་ཐོས་པས་ལོག་པའི་ངྲི་མ་སེལ། །

རྣམ་དག་ཚུལ་བྱིས་པ་ཅད་མས་གཞི་བཟུང་ཞིང་། །

བྱམས་དང་སྤྲིང་རྩེས་བྱང་རྒྱལ་སེམས་འབྱོར་ནས། །

ལྷ་སྟོད་རྣམ་པར་དག་པར་བྱིན་གྱིས་རྫོབས། །

Studying widely, I clear away misguided distortions.
With pure moral discipline, I have set my foundation
And, with love and compassion, I train in bodhicitta. [150]
Now, please, bless my view and conduct to be utterly pure!

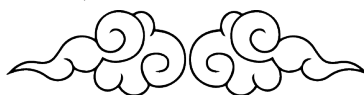
གཉིན་གྲོགས་ལོངས་སྟོད་ལའང་ལྷོས་མེད་པར། །

སྤྱི་ཆོས་གྲུབས་ཤོམས་སྒོ་སྒྲིལ་ལིང་གིས་བསྐྱར། །³²

ཉམས་ལེན་ཟབ་མེད་དོན་དང་མི་འབྲལ་བར། །

དོ་རྩེ་གསུམ་པོ་མཛོད་དུ་འགྱུར་བར་ཤོག། །

Unconcerned with friends and felicities,



I have completely given up on future plans.
 Never parting from the profound meaning of practice,
 May the three vajra convictions unfold in me!³³

དམ་ཚེས་སྐྱབ་ལ་འདུན་པ་གཅིག་ཏུ་བྲིལ། །

གྲོགས་དང་ཕུགས་སྟོང་མཐའ་གཉིས་མི་ལྟར་པར། །³⁴

བྱང་ལྷབ་སྐྱབ་ལ་ཚེ་མཐར་ཕྱིན་པ་ཡི། །

གཏན་པ་བཞི་པོ་མཐའ་རུ་འབྱོར་བར་ཤོག། །

Fused with the will to practice holy Dharma,
 With no friends or goals, keeping out of the two extremes,³⁵
 My whole life spent accomplishing enlightenment—
 May I arrive at the end of the four ambitions!³⁶

མི་ཚེས་སྐྱབ་པའི་བྱ་ནས་ལིང་གིས་བྱད། །

ཚེས་བརྒྱད་བྲལ་བའི་སྤང་པོའི་ངང་ཚུལ་གྱིས། །

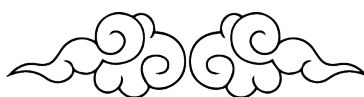
བཀའ་གདམས་གོང་མའི་རྗེས་སུ་སྟོགས་པ་ཡི། །

བྱད་སྟོགས་ཐོབ་པ་གསུམ་ལ་དབང་འབྱོར་ཤོག། །

Having banished myself from ordinary pursuits,
 As a derelict divorced from the eight worldly concerns,
 Joining up with the Kadam forebears,
 May I master banishment, joining, and achievement!³⁷

མདོར་ན་གོགས་གྱིས་ལང་བས་ཆུས་རྫོགས་ཞིང། །³⁸

ལྷམ་སྒྲ་བསྐྱར་བས་བན་གཞིས་རྫོགས་པ་ཡི། །



བྱ་བྲལ་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཆེ་འདི་སྒོས་ཐོང་བའི། །

དབེན་པའི་གནས་སུ་སྐྱབ་པ་མཐར་ཕྱིན་ཤོག། །

In short, motivated by hindrances, I am done with plans.
Hitting the road, I am done with monks and townspeople.
As a king of nothing to be done, letting go of this life,
In solitude, may I reach the end of accomplishment!

བདག་ཀྱང་འདི་ནས་ཆེ་འཕོས་གྱུར་མ་ཐག། །

དགའ་ལྡན་ཡིད་དགའ་ཆོས་འཛིན་གྲོང་ཁྱིམ་དུ། །

རྒྱལ་བ་ཡབ་སྲས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རྩིས་བཟུང་ཞིང། །

རྩོགས་སྒྲིན་སྤང་བ་རྒྱུ་མཆོ་མཐར་ཕྱིན་ནས། །

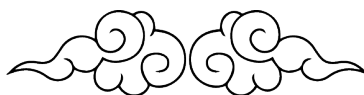
བསྟན་པའི་བདག་པོ་བྱིད་བཞིན་འགྱུར་བར་ཤོག། །

As soon as I, like everyone, pass from this life,
In the city of the Delightful Dharma-Den Wonderland,³⁹
Under the care the Victorious One and his spiritual sons,
Having reached the end of the ocean of completion, [151] maturation, and training,⁴⁰
May I become like you, a master of the teachings!

COLOPHON:

དེ་ལྟར་རྩོམ་ཡབ་སྲས་ཀྱི་གསུང་གླེགས་བཅ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ལས་གསུང་བ་བཞིན་བཀོད་པའི་དགེ་བས་སྐྱ་མ་རིན་ཆེན་འདིས་ཆེ་འདི་སྒོས་
ཐོང་ཆགས་ཆེན་འཁྲི་བ་ཆོད་རི་དྲགས་རྩམ་མ་རྒྱལ་ས་གྲོལ་བ་བཞིན་མི་མེད་དབེན་པའི་གནས་སུ་རང་གཞན་གྱི་དོན་གཉིས་འགྲུབ་
པ་བྱུང་རྒྱུ་ཀྱི་སེམས་རིན་པོ་ཆེས་རྒྱན་གྱིས་ཞེས་དགེ་བཀོད་པའི་མཐུན་རྒྱུ་དུ་རྩོམ་ཡབ་སྲས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་ཐར་ལ་མོས་པ་ཆོས་སྤྱོད་
བའི་བཅན་པ་རྒྱལ་བྱིས་རྒྱུ་མཆོས་བྱིས་པ་དགའོ། །

Through the virtue of this arrangement that reflects the words in the precious volumes of the teachings of the Lord and sons, considering the spiritually nourishing conditions of this precious guru who gave up on this life, cut the fetters of attachment, and who, like a wounded deer escaping from a trap, in a remote place with no people, accomplished his own and others' benefit and extinguished the fire of hostility with the moisture of precious bodhicitta, this was written by the monastic Dharma teacher, Tsultrim Gyatso, in devoted admiration of the stories of the enlightened lives of the Lord and his sons.



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¹ Like Buddha Śākyamuni, Atiśa Dīpaṃkara was born into royalty in Bengal, but he renounced his birthright to pursue spiritual practice. For his biography, see Apple, *Atiśa Dīpaṃkara*, 2019.

² According to James B. Apple, “Traditional accounts mention that he had twelve root gurus” (Apple *Atiśa Dīpaṃkara*, chap.1). The five main gurus from Atiśa’s early life are “the brahmin Jitāri, the scholar-monk Bodhibhadra, the contemplative-monk Vidyākoka, and the tantric yogis Avadhūtipa and Rāhulaguptavajra” (Apple *Atiśa Dīpaṃkara*, chap.1). His most important teacher was Serlingpa (a.k.a., Dharmakīrtiśrī) who he met on his travels to Sumatra. Upon his return to India, he studied with Ratnākaraśānti and Kamalarakṣita. In addition to those teachers, biographies say that “the great adept Nāropa instructed him in the vision of emptiness, Dombipa in yogic discipline, Balinācārya in tantric ritual, Mahājana in miraculous abilities, Bhutakoṭi in the worship of Vajravārāhī, Paramaśva in the special instructions of Nāgārjuna, Prajñābhada in the awakening mind, [and] Ratnākaraśānti in the meaning of the commentaries” (Apple *Atiśa Dīpaṃkara*, chap.1). In Apple’s summary of Atiśa’s traditional biographies, it is said that he “studied the extent of the Buddhist knowledge with one hundred fifty-seven spiritual teachers” during a period of intensive training after he took ordination in the Mahāsāṃghika order at the age of twenty-nine in Bodhgayā.

³ Or, “second victorious one [of our age]” (*rgyal ba gnyis pa*). This epithet is also commonly applied to Nāgārjuna, Guru Rinpoche, and Tsongkhapa.

⁴ “Nurture” (*skyong/skyong ba, pala*). This is possibly a play on the Sanskrit word *pala* since Atiśa came from a royal lineage in the Pala Empire, whose leaders took the name.

⁵ In this line, there is a play on the terms *rgyal ba* (*jina*, “victorious one/conqueror”) and *rgyal sras* (*jinaputra*, “son or daughter of the victorious ones”). In Buddhist contexts, these terms usually refer to buddhas and bodhisattvas. Just above, Atiśa was referred to as the “Second Buddha,” and his sons are his main students who are evoked in the verses that follow. Rather than dwell on the “victor” root of each term here, we translated them more loosely for the sake of elegance and syllabic economy.

⁶ “Illuminator” (*mar me mdzad, dīpaṃkara*) the second part of Atiśa’s name.

⁷ When Atiśa passed away, he informed his students that he would next take birth as a son of a god in Tuṣita Heaven named Stainless Sky [*dri med nam mhka*] (Apple *Atiśa Dīpaṃkara*, chap. 2).

⁸ For Dromtönpa’s biography, see Gardner, “Dromton Gyelwa Junge,” 2010.

⁹ Prince Kōnchok Bang. One of Dromtönpa’s twenty-two prior birth stories recorded in the *Book of Kadam* (Jinpa 2013, 655, n. 484). For a brief summary of this story, see Roesler *A Palace for Those Who Have Eyes to See*, 134).

¹⁰ “Victory’s Source” or “victorious source” (*rgyal ba’i ’byung gnas*), an epithet for Dromtönpa. For Dromtönpa’s biography, see Gardner, “Dromton Gyelwa Junge,” 2010.

¹¹ *Jowo* (*jo bo*) is an honorific title akin to “lord” or “venerable.” It is particularly applied to Atiśa, who is often referred to as *Jowo Je* (“venerable lord”). *Kadampa* refers to a member of the Kadam lineage founded by Atiśa.



¹² “Sevenfold divinity and doctrine” is a term for the core teachings of the Kadam tradition. These include teachings related to four main divine figures (Tārā, Avalokiteśvara, Buddha Śākyamuni, and the protector Acala) and the three sections or *piṭakas* of the Buddhist canon (Vinaya, Sūtra, Abhidharma).

According to Thupten Jinpa, “A fifteenth-century history of the Kadam order offers four different explanations of the name. First, *Kadam* may be defined as ‘those for whom the essence of the entire Buddhist scripture is integrated within the path of the three scopes—the spiritual aspirations of initial, intermediate, and advance capacities—and for whom all the scriptures of the Buddha appear as personal instructions.’ A second interpretation of the meaning of *Kadam* suggests that the tradition is so called ‘because the Kadam founding father, Dromtönpa, chose, in accordance with the sacred instruction of Master Atiśa, the *sevenfold divinity and teaching* as his principal practice.’ ‘Sevenfold’ refers to the threefold teaching (the baskets of monastic discipline, discourses, and knowledge) and the four divinities (Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, Tārā, and Acala). A third interpretation is that when Master Atiśa was residing at Nyethang his disciples accorded great authority to his sacred words, so they came to be known as ‘Kadampas’—those who hold the sacred words as binding. The final interpretation is that the Kadampas are guided by the three baskets of scripture in their overall Dharma practice and approach Vajrayana teachings and practices circumspectly (Jinpa *Wisdom of the Kadam Masters*, intro).

¹³ These seven are most likely the same as the “sevenfold divinity and doctrine” in note thirteen.

¹⁴ Saffron robes (*ngur smig*, *kaṣāya* or *kāṣāya*), a metonym for the monastic tradition in general.

¹⁵ These are: (1) Asaṅga’s *Bodhisattva Levels*; (2) Maitreya’s *Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras*; (3) Śāntideva’s *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* and (4) *Compendium of Trainings*; (5) Āryaśūra’s *Garland of Birth Stories*; and (6) the *Collection of Aphorisms*, attributed to the historical Buddha. The study of these treatises is complemented with further Indian Buddhist classics like Nāgārjuna’s *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, his *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*, and Atiśa’s *Entry into the Two Truths* and *An Instruction on the Middle Way* (Jinpa 2008, 9). See also Gardner 2009.

¹⁶ According to Thupten Jinpa (2008, 9), “Chengawa’s Kadam lineage of pith instructions [*man ngag*, *upadeśa*] emphasizes an approach whereby Atiśa’s essential instructions, rather than classical treatises, are the key basis for practice.” For Chengawa’s biography, see Sonam Rinchen “Chennga Tsultrim Bar,” 2020.

¹⁷ Perfection of wisdom (*shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*, *prajñāparamitā*) carries a rich range of meanings. In his annotations to *The Book of Kadam*, Thupten Jinpa provides the following gloss: “One of the six perfections that lie at the heart of the practice of the bodhisattva. The term refers also to a specific subdivision of the Mahāyāna scriptures that outline the essential aspects of the meditation on emptiness and their associated paths and resultant states. The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines, the Heart Sutra, and the Diamond Cutter are some of the most well-known Perfection of Wisdom scriptures. In *The Book of Kadam* the term is often used as an epithet for Perfection of Wisdom Mother, a feminine divinity that embodies the perfection of wisdom of a fully awakened buddha” (Jinpa 2008, 673).

¹⁸ An epithet of Avalokiteśvara.

¹⁹ For Puchungwa’s biography, see Gardner 2009c.

²⁰ The sixteen drops are: (1) the drop of the outer inconceivable array; (2) the drop of this World Endured; (3) the drop of the realm of Tibet; (4) the drop of one’s abode and the drawn mandala; (5) the drop of Perfection of Wisdom Mother; (6) the drop of her son, Buddha Śākyamuni; (7) the drop of Great Compassion; (8) the drop of Wisdom Tārā; (9) the drop of her wrathful form; (10) the drop of Acala, their immutable nature; (11) the drop of Atiśa; (12) the drop of Dromtön Gyalwe Jungne; (13) the drop of the vast practice of the bodhisattva; (14) the drop of the profound view of emptiness; (15) the drop of the inspirational practice; (16) the drop of great awakening (Jinpa 2008, 13–14).

On these practices, Thupten Jinpa writes, “The idea of the sixteen-drops practice is fairly straightforward. Like a powerful camera lens zooming from the widest possible angle to a progressively smaller focus and, finally, to a tiny point, the meditation becomes increasingly focused, moving from the entire cosmos



to this world in particular, to the realm of Tibet, to the practitioner's own dwelling, and finally culminating within your own body. Within your body, you then visualize inside your heart the Perfection of Wisdom Mother, within whose heart is her son, Buddha Śākyamuni. Within the Buddha's heart is Great Compassion Avalokiteśvara, within whose heart is Tara, and so on, continuing with wrathful Tārā, Acala, Atiśa, and Dromtönpa. Within Dromtönpa's heart you then visualize Maitreya surrounded by the masters of the lineage of vast practice. In his heart you visualize Nāgārjuna surrounded by the masters of the lineage of profound view; and within his heart you visualize Vajradhara surrounded by the masters of the lineage of inspirational practice.

Finally, inside Vajradharas heart, you visualize yourself as a buddha, embodying all three buddha bodies, and within your heart is a white drop the size of a mustard seed. This seed increases in size and turns into a vast radiant jewel container at the center of which your mind is imagined as a yellow drop the size of a pea. This, in turn, increases in size and turns into an ocean of drops the color of refined gold; the ocean is transparent, smooth, resolute, vast, and pervasive, and it reflects all forms. You then rest your mind, without wavering, upon this drop of great awakening, fused, and free of any sense of subject-object duality" (Jinpa 2008, 14).

²¹ "Blazed a trail" renders *srol mdzad pa*, the honorific form of the verb *srol 'byed pa*, which has the sense of initiating a new way within an already established tradition (*srol gtod pa*). According to Thupten Jinpa, "Phuchungwa is most revered as the founder of the 'Kadam lineage of pith instructions' and as the inheritor of Atiśa and Dromtönpa's teachings enshrined in the *Book of Kadam*. He is also credited with being the source of the mind-training practice known as the 'heart of dependent origination,' a text of which can be found in *Mind Training: The Great Collection*" (Jinpa 2013, part I.3).

²² Again, this refers to the "sevenfold divinity and doctrine" seen above.

²³ As mentioned, Puchungwa specifically transmitted the Kadam pith instructions (*man ngag*, *upadeśa*) on interdependence/dependent origination (Jinpa 2008, 9; Jinpa 2013, part I.3).

²⁴ An epithet of Vajrapāṇi.

²⁵ The Three Brothers (*sku mched gsum*) are Putowa, Chen-ngawa, and Puchungwa.

²⁶ Three scopes (*skyes bu gsum*). According to Thupten Jinpa, "The *three scopes* refer to the practitioners of initial, intermediate, and advanced scopes or capacities. Atiśa's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* presents the entire Buddhist path to enlightenment in terms of meditative practices appropriate to these three differing capacities—the initial, who seeks only a refuge from the fears of rebirth in the lower realms; the intermediate, who principally seeks freedom from cyclic existence; and the advanced, who seeks full awakening for the benefit of all beings" (Jinpa 2008, 676).

²⁷ We do not find this fourfold grouping elsewhere in the literature. It seems that Khenpo Ngaga means that the Kadam teachings continued to develop through the media of (1) treatises (*gzhung*)—root texts laying out a key theme; (2) instructions (*gdams pa*) or oral instructions (*gdams ngag*) that have passed down through the lineage for generations; (3) *upadeśa*, or pith instructions (*man ngag*), which are personal, practical oral instructions from guru to disciple; and (4) exegesis (*bstan pa*), a general term for teachings, but often with the sense of commentarial or exegetical literature, as in the Tibetan Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*), the translated commentaries of the Indian Mahāyāna masters. The first line of this stanza contains the word *rim pa* (stage/gradual), which may be a nod to the *Lamrim* (*lam rim*, "Stages of the Path") literature influenced by the Kadam approach of careful, deliberate contemplation and meditation. Famous examples of this genre include Gampopa's *Ornament of Precious Liberation* and Tsongkhapa's *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path*.

²⁸ Atiśa and Dromtönpa

²⁹ Putowa, Chen-ngawa, and Puchungwa.

³⁰ "Marked for death" renders *'chi ba'i ngang tshul can*. A more literal translation might say, "I have a disposition to die."



³¹ The “seven stages” in this line are difficult to identify with certainty. The term is not used in Atiśa’s original *Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* (Atiśa 1973) or *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* (Dowd 2021), nor does it appear in *The Book of Kadam* (Jinpa 2008) or the teachings compiled in *Wisdom of the Kadam Masters* (Jinpa 2013). The most fitting reference we find is to a seven-step contemplation discussed in Tsongkhapa’s *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path*, vol 2. Tsongkhapa calls this teaching the “seven cause-and-effect personal instructions [*rgyu ’bras man ngag bdun*] in the lineage descended from the Great Elder [Atiśa]” (Tsong-kha-pa 2004, 28). These seven stages are (1) recognizing all beings as your mothers; (2) recollecting their kindness; (3) wishing to repay that kindness; (4) love; (5) compassion; (6) wholehearted resolve; (7) *bodhicitta*, or awakening mind. (See also Sherburne 1983, 62, n. 2; Sopa 1976, xxii). On Khenpo Ngaga’s deep faith in Tsongkhapa, see Ngawang Palzang 2013, 47, 144, 153, 189, 216.

³² The term for “plans” in this line is usually spelled *grabs gshom*. Here the spelling is *grab shams*, which may be a regional variant, but is more likely simply a misspelling, since *grabs* and *gshom pa* are both etymologically related to “preparation.” We have amended the Tibetan here to *grabs shoms* since *shoms* is at least a valid form of the verb *gshom pa*.

³³ Normally, the three vajras are the three doors of body, speech, and mind infused with wisdom. In the Kadam context, however, they refer to the “three vajra [convictions],” which, along with the “four aims” and the “three ranks or achievements,” make up the Ten Innermost Jewels of the Kadam tradition [*phugs nor bcu*] (See Zopa 2012, 169–188). The Kadam three vajras are (1) the uncaptured vajra (*theqs med rdo rje*): not allowing friends and family to get in the way of one’s single-minded practice; (2) the shameless vajra (*khrel med rdo rje*): not caring what people think or say about you in your pursuit of enlightenment; (3) the wisdom vajra (*ye shes rdo rje*), which Lama Zopa says, “means we resolve never to break the promise we have made to practice pure Dharma by renouncing this life. Completely turning away from all that is essenceless and meaningless, we make the firm, unshakable, indestructible determination to make our life equal with the holy Dharma” (Zopa 2012, 184).

³⁴ Tibetan amended from *phugs stong* to *phug stong*.

³⁵ The two extremes are nihilistic and eternalistic views.

³⁶ The four aims, or ambitions, or entrustments (*gtad pa bzhi* or *gtad sa bzhi*), along with the three vajras and four achievements, make up the ten innermost jewels of the Kadam tradition [*phugs nor bcu*]. The Rangjung Yeshe Translation Group translates these four in the following way: “Aim your mind at the Dharma. Aim your Dharma practice at simple living. Aim at simple living for your entire life. Aim your death at solitude.” (https://rywiki.tsadra.org/index.php/gtad_pa_bzhi). See Rigpa Shedra’s entry for “Four Ambitions”; Jinpa 2013, intro; and Zopa 2012, 169–179).

³⁷ Along with the four aims and three vajras, expulsion/banishment, joining, and achievement (*bud snyegs/snyogs thob gsum*) round out the ten innermost jewels of the Kadam tradition. (1) “Expulsion/Banishment” means the achievement of being self-ostracized from ordinary society and the ways of normal people (*mi gral nas bud*); (2) “joining” means joining the company of dogs (*khyi gral snyegs*), which should be respected for their loyalty and perseverance in the face of hardship and abuse; (3) “achieving” means achieving the rank of a divine (viz., enlightened) being (*lha gral thob*). See Zopa 2012, 184–188.

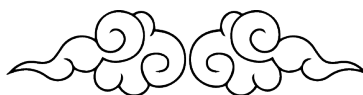
³⁸ Unable to locate this prayer in the 2017 Sichuan edition of Khenpo Ngaga’s *Collected Works*, we have speculatively amended the Tibetan of this line, which reads *geg gi lang bas* in the original—a grammatically and semantically problematic phrase: *geg* is one word for cancer, which is then followed by a genitive particle, then the instrumentalized present tense of the verb *lang ba* (“to rise/get up”). Taking that literally is extremely awkward and would result in something like “With the arising of [the] cancer,” which would only make sense if the cancer were taken as a metaphor for disillusionment (*skyo shes*) with saṃsāra. We think it is much more likely that there are simply a couple of scribal errors in the line. Thus, *geg* is amended to *gegs* (“hindrance”) and genitive *gi* is amended to instrumental particle *kyis* according to spelling rules. This gives us a much clearer and predictable meaning, “persuaded/motivated/affected by hindrances.”

³⁹ “Delightful Dharma-Den Wonderland” is a slightly more euphonious alternative to the more literal “Pleasant



Doctrine-Bearing Joyous Place” (*dga ldan yid dga' chos 'dzin*) (Gedun 1989, 143). The term refers to Maitreya’s abode adjoining Tuṣita Heaven. Geshe Gedun Lodö explains, “There is a place called the Joyous [*dga' ldan*], which is one of the six areas of Desire Realm gods. There is in the Joyous a pure land called the Pleasant Doctrine-Bearing Joyous Place. The Protector Maitreya lives there. The Joyous itself is contained within cyclic existence because it is one of the six areas of dogs of the Desire Realm; it is not a pure land. However, the Pleasant Doctrine-Bearing Joyous Place is a pure land. It is in the Joyous but away from it, just as monasteries are within cities but at a distance from them” (Gedun 1989, 143).

⁴⁰ Completion, maturation, and training (*rdzogs smin sbyang*) refer to completing the two accumulations, ripening or maturing beings, and training in pure perception (Ngawang Pelzang 2004, 111, 125, 183, 194, 254).



Tib Shelf
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