

TWO LETTERS BY PABONGKHA RINPOCHE

1) A letter (Phabongkha) sent to the Chinese General, Lu Chu Tang in the Earth Tibet Year

In these days most of the Emperors and kings misperceive the barbaric religion as the best religion and have turned their backs against the nectar of the Buddha's teaching and opened the gate wide towards the lower realm for themselves and as well as their subjects. At such a time as a great leader and also because of your strong prayers and merits, you have respected only Manjughosh Tsongkhapa's teaching lineage, which is the core of the Buddha's teachings, and put it on the crown of your head and held it firm at your heart. You have thus spread and propagated the unsullied teaching in many provinces including your own and have sown the seed of the path of liberation. I am grateful to you and the more I reflect the more my mind is flooded with rejoice and admiration like the waves of oceans touching the sky. Thank you very much. Still on this earth many other faiths like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Kongtse (Confucianism), Bon (ancient native Tibetan religion) etc. flourish and each of them claims their own system as the best. However, except in the teaching of the Buddha, all the others do not have the path to liberation. They do not even have the potential to abandon even one type of afflictive emotions. Even if they practice and uphold their faith in great hardship for a long time, it will simply open the gate of the lower realm and no positive result will be achieved at all from them. It is only a deceptive word showing what is not a path as a path.

Contrarily in the case of the Buddha's teaching, it easily bestows the "State of Liberation and Omniscience", closes the door of rebirth in samsara and lower realms and it is possible to eradicate completely the 84,000 classes of afflictive emotions and their propensities. In this teaching, without requiring much hardship, one can travel from a peaceful path to a peaceful fruit. Since this true teaching is always non-deceptive we should endeavour to make our life meaningful from a long term perspective and follow only the teaching of the Buddha. Although this teaching has four tenets, it is only the Prasangika Madhyamika which realises the unmistakable emptiness, which is free from the abyss of permanence and nihilism, and which is the ultimate and exact intention of the Buddha.

Although in the land of Tibet there are many different tenets like that of Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, Gelugpa and so forth it is only the Gelug School which establishes the unmistakable view of emptiness and the Prasangika Madhyamika system which is the philosophy of Nagarjuna. It is not only the philosophical view but also in terms of meditation it is the perfect meditation devoid of laxity and torpor. As for its behaviour it is again pure as it is practiced in accordance with the vinaya teachings. Thus it is only the Gelug School which knows how to adopt the three: the view, the meditation, the behaviour and in fact the complete teaching of the Buddha as one integrated practice in the form of the stages of the path to enlightenment. Thus this system of teaching of Tsongkhapa is the heart essence of the Buddha's teaching and is therefore like a pinnacle of the victorious banner. As such to uphold this teaching by oneself and

to disseminate it to others is the best and far-reaching Boddhisattva way of practice. As a great leader you have done the best to spread this teaching in the province of China just as you have done in the past. And also in the regions of Kham you have restored and further developed the teachings through various means. I will be grateful for your continuous noble Boddhisattva conduct of upholding the responsibility of the Gelug School.

2. Again a letter is sent to Lu Chu Tang in the Earth Rabbit Year

Honest expression of the General presentation of Inner and Outer Tenets of the World.

In general there are many religions in this world. Every follower thinks that his own faith is the best. However, if we honestly examine, Christianity and Islam are barbarism and therefore are the worst and there is no other religion worse than these. The non-Buddhist systems like that of Kapila and Sankhya are slightly better than the aforementioned faiths but they do not have the path to liberation. They may undertake great hardships like self-immolation and jumping upon a trident but there is no path to liberation. It opens the gate to the lower realm. The so-called Bonpo is also not at all different from the other non-Buddhist faiths. Far from achieving liberation it opens the door of the lower realm. Since Confucianism is also not the teaching of the Buddha it simply gives temporary happiness but not liberation. As all these systems are opposite to the Buddha's teachings, leave aside achieving Buddhahood, they do not at all have the path to liberation. One cannot show even a single example of one who has achieved liberation after having practiced these faiths. Without exception most of them fall into the unfathomable lower realms.

It is only Buddhism which is the path of liberation. Even in Buddhism, the compassionate Buddha Shakya Muni knew that if the profound and ultimate truth of emptiness is taught right at the outset, it would not be understood by the followers. Just as children are gradually taught, starting from the alphabet, in the same way at first easily understandable teachings are taught. Therefore he first taught the Vaibhashika Tenet System which explains grosser meanings of selflessness of persons. After that he taught the Sautantrika Tenet System which is more profound than the previous one. Then he taught the Mind Only School, which is again more profound and which teaches the grosser selflessness of phenomena. It is this school which Thangsen Lama propagated in China. After that he taught the Madhyamika Tenet System which explains the subtle selflessness, the ultimate view.

Here also we have Indian Acharya/Masters Bhavaviveka; Shantarakshita, who even though they have entered the Madhyamika philosophy could not fathom the meaning of very subtle emptiness, the ultimate intention of the Buddha. Thus they are middling Madhyamikas and they are known as the Svatantrika Madhyamikas.

And we also have Indian Acharyas like Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti who had unmistakably fathomed and realised the ultimate intention of the Buddha, which was trail-blazed by Nagarjuna, and they are called Prasangika Madhyamikas. Regarding the path of liberation and Buddhahood, there are two parts: wisdom and method. All those tenet systems below the Svatantrikas have found the unmistaken path of the method but have failed to realise the ultimate view which is the wisdom aspect, and therefore they have not realised the ultimate emptiness but just a facsimile. Hence it is only the Prasangika Madhyamika System which realises the unmistaken subtle emptiness, the ultimate thought of the Buddha.

There is not even a single individual who has realised the subtle emptiness without entering into the Prasangika System. In the absence of this realisation it is not possible to attain enlightenment. Therefore this Prasangika Madhyamika System, the system of Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti is the best, the supreme and the peak among the four Buddhist Tenet Systems. In Tibet there are many systems of Buddhist teachings like Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, Jonang, Bodong and others. All these are Buddhist teachings and they all have wonderful methods of accumulation of merits, purification of obstructions, meditation on deities and recitation of mantras. Through these practices one can achieve liberation. Therefore these are a hundred thousand million times better than Christianity, Islam and other non-Buddhist teachings. However, there is no system like that of Tsongkhapa's, which is complete, unmistaken, profound and fast.

Although each of the Tibetan philosophical schools feel and assert that their own philosophy is that of Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti and thus the philosophy of Prasangika, but, because of its very subtlety the followers could not realise the main intention of their preceding learned scholar practitioners and have thus erred. Most of them have become like the philosophy of Hwashang Mahayana. By becoming so one will fall into nihilism and will become the cause for hell. Therefore, in Tibet, except Tsongkhapa's philosophy, all others are mistaken. As such I can affirm that at present on this earth and beneath the sky it is only the refined gold, like Manjushri Tsongkhapa's system which is alone totally faultless in every aspect, be it the philosophical view, the meditation or the conduct. It is complete, profound and extensive and if one has the knowledge and the ability to practice this teaching properly then one will be able to attain Buddhahood within twelve human years or even in three years and three fortnights. This can be sustained through thousands of reasonings and references. The core of the teaching is the path to enlightenment alone. While this wonderful philosophy is existent many unfortunately adhere strongly to inferior teachings. Many such people are there in Tibet as well, which is a clear indication of lack of merit. The establishment of Tsongkhapa's teaching, the core of the Buddha's teachings, in your country is such a rare privilege that even tens and hundreds of millions of merits accumulated by Lord Indra and Brahma cannot equal even a portion of this merit. This is really fortunate.

Loppon Kunga Namdrol
Om ah hum vajraguru padma siddhi hum
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