



*Verses Urging to
Take the Essence of
this Human Life*

by *Lama Tsongkhapa*

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Homage to my lamas and Mañjugosha.

1.

I respectfully prostrate to Venerable Tara
Who has taken responsibility to help all who are suffering,
Bestowing protection to whomever entrusts themselves,
And for the merit and happiness of all migrators.

2.

“Whomever has fallen into the great ocean of suffering,
I shall liberate each and every one of them.”
You subsequently put this tremendously powerful promise into practice.
With veneration and immense respect, I place the crown of my head
At your lotus-born feet, loving, compassionate mother.

3.

You, my friend, who has attained an excellent human rebirth,
Listen and reflect sincerely and intently to this brief presentation
Of a greatly beneficial teaching that I am about to give!

4.

If you have not repeatedly trained in the reflection that death
Is certain to come, and that it will definitely come swiftly,
Even when virtuous thoughts occasionally arise,
They will amount to nothing more than striving for this life’s pleasures.

5.

Therefore, when you see or hear of others’ death
Reflect that this will also happen to me: Death is certain,
It will come quickly, and it will come without warning!

6.

This life's body, resources and loved ones, will all be left behind,
But virtuous and non-virtuous karma will follow like a shadow.
From non-virtuous karma, long lasting and intensely powerful
Sufferings of the three lower realms arise.
And higher realms arise by means of virtuous karma.

7.

The method for rapidly attaining the state of buddhahood
Must come to be known and reflected on daily!
Having contemplated in this way, go for refuge earnestly.

8.

The Buddha recommended the non-ordained to
Train their mind in accord with the five lay-vows and
The eight one day vows of accumulation and purification.
Having received these vows properly, it is essential to guard them,
Particularly keeping them for the benefit of this and the next life!

9.

Holy beings look down on drinking and taking intoxicants,
Therefore friends, you too should see it as beneath you, and
It would be excellent if you turned away completely from such activities,
Otherwise, you will eventually encounter problems and difficulties.

10.

Rely on restraint even when experiencing temporary happiness!
Would appealing food not be thoroughly rejected
By those who have come to know that it is mixed with poison?

11.

Make daily offerings and so forth to the Three Jewels, also
Exert in virtue, purify past misdeeds, and
Henceforth, progressively restrain your actions.
Dedicate these accumulations of virtue as causes for buddhahood.

12.

In brief, each time we are born and every time we die,
We are born alone and we die alone, thus
Our friends, loved ones, and so forth all let us down.
What never lets us down is the sacred Dharma.
This short lifespan is fleeting, like a flash of lightning.

13.

However much you have done, from now, this is the time
To attain everlasting happiness. Think about this deeply!
Do not return empty handed from this precious human life.
Thus, you are well advised to accumulate as much merit as possible.

14.

Not being overly excited at slight pleasures,
Nor overwhelmed by trivial problems and difficulties,
Turn away from the commotion of this life, and thus
May all migrators attain sustenance through delight in the Dharma.

15.

So that migrators in general can accumulate merit,
As well as for artisans, those who have enquiring minds, and
The wise and illustrious – all of whom are of great fortune;
The monk Lobsang Dragpa taught
These verses urging to take the essence of this human life.

*Translated by Venerable Lobsang Dorje for the Winter Retreat
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