

The Three Noble Principles

by Khenpo Shenga

As it is said, “The root of the Mahāyāna path lies in the three noble principles.”

The Noble Beginning: Arousing Bodhicitta

We begin by taking refuge because the Three Precious Jewels—the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha—are entirely dependable and unchanging. We then consider how wonderful it would be if all sentient beings, who are infinite in number, were to be freed from the sufferings of the three realms of saṃsāra, and how wonderful it would be if they were to attain the level of omniscience and perfect buddhahood. If we train in cultivating thoughts such as these again and again, we will at some point develop a heartfelt benevolence towards all beings. At that time, we must not be content with having the mere wish to help. We must say to ourselves: “In order to lead these beings, who have cared for me with such kindness throughout the course of my beginningless lives in saṃsāra, to the level of perfect enlightenment, I will practise the Dharma, without concern for my own body or even my own life.” With this thought, we must exert ourselves, by means of body, speech and mind, in actual virtuous practice.

The Noble Main Part: Referencelessness

We must decide, with firm conviction, that all that appears to us is nothing but our own deluded perception, and does not have even the slightest atom’s worth of true reality. It is nothing but the illusory perception of the mind. Having reached this conclusion, we must remind ourselves of it again and again. Mind too is perceptible yet lacking in true existence, and even as it appears to us, it is intangible and devoid of concrete reality. When we recognize this, we must rest in that very recognition, without any other thought—simply remaining in that vivid state of openness and clarity.

In between sessions, we must consider that since everything is but our own delusory perception, it is quite pointless to react to ordinary occurrences and activities as if they had real, concrete existence. At the same time, even though such things are unreal, we must maintain bodhicitta, love and compassion for sentient beings who experience suffering without end. Then, once again, we must rest in meditation free from thoughts. By training in this continuous flow of practice, we will cut the chain of delusion and bring about our own and others’ welfare.

The Noble Conclusion: Dedication

Whatever sources of virtue we have accumulated—however great or small they might be—we must dedicate towards all beings’ attainment of perfect enlightenment. With the thought that we are dedicating just as noble Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra and other great beings did in the past, we can recite prayers such as *Samantabhadra’s Prayer for Good Actions*.

Resting in the natural condition, beyond the ordinary mind, is the Dharmakāya,
Forever being occupied with activity is the cause of saṃsāra.

At this critical juncture, the dividing line between conditioned existence and the peace of nirvāṇa,

Turn your mind to the Dharma, my fellow yogin!

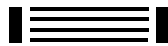
A monk-follower of the Gyalwang Karmapa requested a few words of instruction, and so I, Shenpen Nangwa, offered this brief advice.

| Translated by Adam Pearcey, 2007.



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