

**A GARLAND OF ESSENTIAL POINTS
FOR STUDENTS**

HEART-ESSENCE OF THE GREAT MASTERS

By His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche

Root guru, precious and most kind,
Lord of the mandala, sole unfailing lasting refuge,
With your compassion, take hold of me!
I work only for this life, not keeping death in mind,
Wasting this free, well-favored human birth.

Human life, lasting an instant, like a dream -
It might be happy, it might be sad.
Not wishing for joy, not avoiding sadness,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

This human life,
like a butterlamp set out in the wind -
It might last a long time or it might not.
Not letting ego's hold tighten further,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

A life of luxury, like a bewitching apparition -
It might come to pass or it might not.
With the ways of the eight worldly dharmas
cast away like chaff,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

All these underlings, like a bunch of birds in a tree -
They might surround me, they might not.
Not letting others lead me around by the nose,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

This illusory body,
like a rotting 100-year-old house -
It might last, it might fall into dust.
Not caught up in efforts
to get food, clothes, or medicines,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

This dharma behavior, like a child's game -
It might go on, it might stop.
Undeceived by things that don't really matter,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

All these gods and spirits, like a mirror's reflections -
They might give help, they might do harm.
Not seeing my own deluded visions to be enemies,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

All this confused chatter, traceless as an echo -
It might be interesting, it might not.
With the Three Jewels and my own mind
bearing witness,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Things that may prove useless in time of real need,
like a deer's antlers, -
I might know them, I might not.
Not placing my confidence
merely in the arts and sciences,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

These gifts and money given by the faithful,
like deadly poison -
I might receive them, I might not.
Not spending my life
trying to accumulate evil earnings,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

This lofty station, like dogshit wrapped in satin -
I might have it, I might not.
Knowing my own rottenness at first hand,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Friends and family,
like travelers who come together for a fair -
They might be vicious, they might be loving.
Cutting attachment's tough cord from the heart,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

All these possessions,
like the wealth found in a dream -
I might own them, I might not.
Not using tact and flattery to turn others' heads,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

This rank in the hierarchy,
Like a tiny bird perched on a branch -
It might be high, it might be low.
Without making myself miserable
wishing for a better position,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Practicing the spells of black magic,
like deadly weapons -
I might be able to cast them, I might not.

Not buying the knife that cuts my own throat,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Doing prayers,
like a parrot saying 'om mani padme hum' -
I might do them, I might not.
Without boasting about whatever I do,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

The way one teaches the dharma,
like flowing water -
I might be expert, I might not.
Without thinking that mere eloquence is dharma,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Intellect that makes quick discriminations,
like a rooting pig -
It might be sharp, it might be dull.
Not allowing the barbs of
pointless anger and attachment to arise,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Meditation experiences,
like well-water in summer -
They may increase, they may lessen.
Without chasing after rainbows as children do,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

This pure perception,
like rain on a mountaintop -
It might arise, it might not.
Without taking deluded experience to be real,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

These freedoms and favourable conditions,
like a wish-fulfilling gem -
If they are lacking, there is no way
to accomplish the holy dharma.
Not throwing away what is already in my own hand,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

The glorious guru,
like a lamp that lights the way to liberation -
If I cannot meet him, there is no way
to realize the true nature.
Not jumping off a cliff when I know the path to go on,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

The holy dharma,
like a medicine to cure disease -
If I don't hear it, there is no way
to know what should be done and not done.
Not swallowing poison
when I can tell benefit from harm,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

The changing cycle of joy and sorrow,
like the changing seasons -
If this isn't seen, there is no way to achieve renunciation.
As a time of suffering will surely come around to me,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Samsara, like a stone fallen deep into water -
If I don't get out now, I won't get out later.
Pulling myself out by the rope of the
compassionate Three Jewels,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Liberation's good qualities,
like an island of jewels -
If they aren't known, there is no way
to begin to make efforts.
Having seen the advantage of permanent victory,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

The life stories of the great masters,
like the essence of amrita -
If they aren't known, there is no way
for confidence to arise.
Not choosing self-destruction
when I can tell victory from defeat,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Bodhicitta, like a fertile field -
Unless it is cultivated, there is no way
to achieve enlightenment.
Not staying idle
when there is a great aim to be accomplished,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

My own mind, like a monkey's nonsense -
Without keeping guard, there is no way
to avoid conflicting emotions.
Not acting without restraint, like a lunatic,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Ego, like a shadow one is born with -
Until it's abandoned, there is no way
to reach a place of real joy.
When the enemy is in my clutches,
why treat him as friend?
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

The five poisons, like hot embers among ashes -
Until they're destroyed,
one can't remain at rest in the natural state.
Not raising baby vipers in my pockets,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

This mindstream,
like the tough hide of a butter-bag -
If it's not tamed and softened,
one can't mix mind with dharma.
Without spoiling the child that is born of itself,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

These ingrained bad habits, karmic patterns,
like the strong currents of a river -
If they aren't cut,
one can't avoid acting contrary to the dharma.
Without selling weapons to my enemies,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

These distractions, like never-ending waves -
If they aren't given up, there is no way
to become stable.
When I can do as I like, why practice samsara?
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

The lama's blessings,
like spring warming up soil and water -
If they don't enter into me, there is no way
to be introduced to the nature of mind.
When there is a short-cut,
why take the long way around?
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

This retreat in the wilderness,
like summer in a lush place where herbs grow -
If I don't remain here, there is no way
for good qualities to be born.
When high up in the mountains,
don't wander back into black towns.
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Desire for pleasure,
like a bad-luck spirit entering the house -
If I'm not free of it,
I'll never stop working toward suffering.
Not making offerings to voracious ghosts
as my personal gods,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Mindfulness, like the lock on a castle gate -
If it is lacking, one can't
stop the movements of illusion.
When the thief is surely coming,
why forget to bar the door?
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

The true nature, unchanging, like the sky -
Until it's realized, one can't
completely resolve doubts as to the view.

Not letting myself be chained by theories,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

Awareness, like a flawless piece of crystal -
Until it's seen, intentional meditation cannot dissolve.
When there's an inseparable companion,
why go off looking for another?
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

The face of ordinary mind, like an old friend -
If it's not seen, all that one does is misleading.
Without groping in the darkness
of my own closed eyes,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings.

In short, without giving up
This life's preoccupations, there's no way
to accomplish the sacred teachings after death.
Having decided to show myself great kindness,
May all that I do be toward the dharma.

May I not have wrong views toward the guru
who has given instruction in accord with the dharma.
May I not lose faith in the yidam when misfortunes occur.
May I not put off practice when circumstances are hard.
May there be no obstacles to attaining siddhi.

All these activities are pointless,
like making a grand tour of a wasteland.
All this trying just makes my mindstream more rigid.
All this thinking only adds confusion onto confusion.
All that passes for dharma to ordinary people
only makes for further binding.

So much activity - nothing comes of it.
So much thinking - no point to it.
So much wanting - no time for it.
Having given this up,
May I be able to practice according to instructions.

If I must do something,
may Buddha's teaching bear it witness.
If I must do something, mix mindstream and dharma.
If I must accomplish something,
read the life stories of past masters.
What's the use of other things? Spoiled brat!
Take a low seat and become rich with contentment.
Try hard to get free of the eight worldly concerns.

May the guru's blessings enter into me,
May my realization become equal to the sky.
Grant your blessings so that I may reach Kuntuzangpo's throne.

Written by Jigdral Yeshe Dorje for his own prayers,
Condensing the essential meaning from the vajra words of advice from previous great masters.

This was offered with prayers for the continued blessing of H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche, Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, and for the long life of his emanation, for the sake of all beings.

Translated by Bhakha Tulku Rinpoche and Constance Wilkinson.

Sarva Mangalam.