



Tibetan Text Introductions

Explanation

The various Buddhist texts have a very similar structure concerning the introduction text material. Here are three examples, Je Tsongkhapa's *Greater Stages of the path*, Lord Atisha's *Light on the Path to Buddhahood*, and finally Lord Buddha's spoken words, or *Sutra called the Diamond Cutter*. We will analyze how each text starts, and this way we could also know how various other texts are named, and so forth.

Je Tsongkhapa's Greater Steps on the Path, or in Tibetan:

ལམ་རིམ་ཆེན་མོ། *lam rim chen mo*:

༄།མཉམ་མེད་ཙོང་ཁ་པ་ཆེན་པོས་མངོན་པའི་བྱང་ཆུབ་ལམ་རིམ་ཆེ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

༄།ན་མོ་གྲུ་རུ་མཉམ་གྱོ་ལྷ་ཡ།

The Tibetan texts have ornamentations that indicate that something is a title, or even the beginning of the next page; this is done with the following symbol:

༄། Note also that the whole title ends with །།

If we take the first sentence as whole, it is the title of the text. Tibetan texts have a very long title that describes the whole book, what it contains, and so forth. In many cases the book has a shorter name, in this case ལམ་རིམ་ཆེན་མོ། *lam rim chen mo*, but this is not clear from the actual title presented.

Going backwards in the first sentence, it ends with: བཞུགས་སོ།། *shuk so*.

This is translated as *herein contains*. If you find these words at the end of a beginning section of a book, then you have found the title section.

Going back to the beginning of the title, it starts with: མཉམ་མེད་ *nyam me, unequalled*. This is a start of a honorifics of the writer, and the next words are ཙོང་ཁ་པ་ *tsong kha pa, Tsongkhapa*. The honorifics continue with ཆེན་པོས་ *chen pö*, the ending པོས་ is the *by* particle, so this is *by the great*. Thus the whole title of the author is *by the great, unequalled Tsongkhapa*.

Next, མངོན་པའི་ *dze pay* is *composition of* where the པའི་ *pay* has the *of* (genitive) particle.

བྱང་ཆུབ་ *jang chub* is *enlightenment*, ལམ་ *lam* is *path*, རིམ་ *rim* is *stage*.

ཚེ་བ *che wa* is *great*. As you noticed, the shorter known title is not present in the actual title, so this is where it's good to know more about the text itself and what the shorter name actually is.

The next line is homage, by the homage the author expresses that he or she wants to finish the text, and the author also prays for a specific quality that is part of the homage. In many cases, even in Tibetan author texts, this line is in Sanskrit:

ཨོཾ། འུ་མོ་གུ་རུ་མཆོ་རྒྱུ་ཡ།
namo guru Manjugosha-ye

This is now suddenly a Sanskrit lesson! *namo* means *I bow down*, *guru* is *spiritual teacher*, *Manjugosha* is another name for *Manjushri, the Gentle Voice*, the Buddha of Wisdom. This indicates that the text is about wisdom, the wisdom that understands reality in order to become enlightened.

Lord Atisha's Light on the Path to Buddhahood:

ཨོཾ། གྱ་གར་སྐད་དུ་བོ་ནི་བླ་ཐ་བླ་དྲི་པོ་བོད་སྐད་དུ་བྱང་ཚུབ་ལམ་གྱི་སྒྲོན་མ།
 བྱང་ཚུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་འཇམ་དཔལ་གཞོན་རུང་གྱུར་བ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ།

The text again starts with the ornaments, and after this the title is given in two formats, the Sanskrit name and the translated Tibetan name. As this is from Lord Atisha the original text is in Sanskrit. གྱ་གར་ *gya gar* is *India*, and སྐད་དུ་ *ska du* is *in the language*, but the best way to translate this language of India is *In Sanskrit* as all Mahayana texts that came from India were written in Sanskrit.

The following is then the Sanskrit title: བོ་ནི་བླ་ཐ་བླ་དྲི་པོ་. Again the Tibetan letters try to emulate the Sanskrit letters as close as possible. In this case the Sanskrit title is *bodhipathapradipa*. You could see the stacking of letters for the *dhi* part as well as the prolonged རྩ་ *pa* as Tibetan usually don't have long vowels, so this is a way to indicate the pronunciation.

Next the title says: བོ་དེ་སྐད་དུ་, *bö ke du*, in the language of Tibetan, or in Tibetan:

བྱང་ཚུབ་ *jang chub* means enlightenment, ལམ་ *lam* is path, གྱི་ *gyi* is a particle indicating genitive, ownership, and you look at the owner on the right side of this particle, and what it owns on the left side, so we need to read a little bit more. སྒྲོན་ *drön* is a lamp, and the སྒྲོན་མ་ *drön pa* is a verb, to light. So the total sentence is Light on the Path to Buddhahood. The next sentence is praise for something, and it makes sense to start from the end with the verb. ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ། *chak sel lo* means to prostrate or to pay homage (in Sanskrit *namo*).

The verb here ends with a proper verb ending with the ལོ lo section. In verse this is sometimes omitted, but in commentaries and proper texts it's quite common to see this.

We pay homage to something, or ལལ la, the particle that is hard to translate, there are many ways to translate it, but in this case it's natural to see it means 'to'.

གྱུར་པ gyur pa means to become, but! Here you have to be careful, you start looking up words in the dictionary related to ལྷུར nur, and you find oblong and so forth, and then you get really confused. After a while you actually find out that there's a name here mentioned, or:

འཇམ་དཔལ་གཞོན་ནུར་གྱུར་པ jam pel zhön nur gyur pa, or Manjushri-kumara-bhuta in Sanskrit, the Youthful Gentle Splendor. Oh the fun when finding the right words. In many cases the titles and the homage could have homage to a bodhisattva, or Buddha, so it's good to hunt around for the right definition.

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་ jan chub sem pa is bodhisattva. So the whole sentence could be translated as "I bow down to the bodhisattva Manjushri Youthful Gentle Splendor". This homage also is a classification of the text; it is related to the wisdom part of the Buddhist teachings, or how to get Buddhahood, as homage to Manjushri classifies the text as a wisdom text.

Lord Shakyamuni Buddha's Diamond Cutter Sutra:

༄༅།འཕགས་པ་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པ་དོ་རྗེ་གཙོད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ།།
༄༅།།ཀྱུ་གར་རྣམ་དུ།ཨ་རུ་བཙྰ་ལྷོ་ད་ཀ་བ་རྫོ་བ་ར་མི་ཏ་རྣ་མ་མ་རྣ་ཡ་ན་སྤྱ་བྱ་བོད་རྣམ་དུ།
འཕགས་པ་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པ་དོ་རྗེ་གཙོད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།
།སངས་རྒྱས་དང་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ།།འདི་རྣམ་དཔག་གིས་
ཐོས་པ་དུས་གཅིག་ན་ཤོ།

I'm leaving this somewhat open, as an exercise to the reader, to see how far they could go along with this title. The shorter name for Diamond Cutter is དོ་རྗེ་གཙོད་པ། dor je chö pa. Perfection of Wisdom in Tibetan is ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པ། she rab kyi parol tu chin pa. ཞེས་བྱ་བ། she je wa means what is called. This is another good word good to know when looking through titles.

The rest is somewhat left open as a good exercise to go through and see how much you know.

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There was a deliberate ordering of these titles, by the way. Lamrim chenmo, Je Tsongkhapa's masterpiece, was based on Lord Atisha's Light on the Path to Buddhahood. Lord Atisha's text, as well as the Je Tsongkhapa text, as well as all Lamrim literature, comes from the Perfection of Wisdom teachings taught by Lord Buddha.
