

ATISHA

A Biography of the Renowned Buddhist Sage



Translated by Thubten Kelsang Rinpoche and Ngodrub Paljor, with John Blofeld.
First published by the Social Science Association Press of Thailand, Bangkok, in 1974.
Reprinted by Mahayana Publications, Tushita Mahayana Meditation Centre,
New Delhi, 1983, 1984.
ISBN 0 86171 015 0.

Foreword by H.H. the XIV Dalai Lama



I wish to offer my congratulations and express my appreciation and pleasure to the Tibetan Bhikshus, Thubten Kalsang and Ngodrub Paljor, together with Mr. John Blofeld of Great Britain, all residents of Thailand, for preparing and publishing this abridged translation into English of the life and deeds of the incomparable Great Master Atisha.

The great being known as the Venerable Master Atisha, Dipamkara Srijnana, was born in Bengal, East India, in the second half of the tenth century. From a very young age, he studied myriads of scriptural texts on various subjects in harmony with his personal practice. He became a great master-practitioner famous throughout India.

In coming to Tibet in the eleventh century, Atisha eliminated all mistakes there from misunderstandings and lack of understanding concerning the textual and oral teachings of Hinayana and Mahayana as well as Tantrayana. By illuminating the path of how to practice all the teachings of the Buddha without any contradiction, he has been extremely kind, especially to the Tibetans of the Land of the Snow. Therefore, I offer my prayers and hopes that this publication into English of the life and deeds of the Venerable Atisha will be of vast benefit to many fortunate beings.

Gelong Tenzin Gyatso, the XIV Dalai Lama
September 10, 1973

Translators' Preface

This volume consists of a complete translation from the Tibetan of *The Biography of Atisha* by Gurugana Dharmakaranama, together with extracts from *The Spread of Buddhism in Tibet* compiled by the Tibetan Teachers' Training College at Dharamsala, India, which have been added to make the story complete by giving an account of Atisha's visit to Tibet.

Atisha, an Indian monk of royal birth, who was born in 980 A.D., entered Tibet in the year 1038 and died near Lhasa in 1052 A.D. The author of a great number of learned works and founder of the Kadampa sect from which the present-day Gelugpa sect is derived, he is so profoundly revered for his wisdom that Tibetans regard him as an incarnation of Manjushri Bodhisattva. Above all he is honored for purifying Tibetan Buddhism of certain doubtful tendencies and restoring the great Mahayana doctrine in its pristine purity.

Part of the charm and interest of this book lies in its being an authentic example of Tibetan historical writings. The reverential approach tends to poetic truth rather than to historical accuracy, but it would be wrong to treat the more fabulous incidents as having no foundation in fact. For example, the picturesque passage in which Atisha's companion, Bhumisara, is depicted as destroying the palace of a heretical goddess and gravely injuring Maheshvara, King of Heretics, besides obliterating the black tent of the Bonpo King of the Shangshung by hurling thunderbolts upon them from the ocean where his ship was becalmed, is not intended to be taken literally, but to represent the prowess of Atisha and his companions in rooting out false teachings that obscured the light of the Dharma. For the rest, the book contains many passages of great beauty, some edifying discourses in the Dharma and some delightful poetry of which much of the excellence has been lost in the process of translation.

The method used to render the work into English resembles, in a very humble way, that of the great translators who translated the Mahayana Canon from Sanskrit into Tibetan. That is to say, it is the work of a team consisting of people with different sets of qualifications. One of us has a scholarly knowledge of Tibetan and a fair command of English; another is an English writer with a knowledge of Buddhism and some acquaintance with the Tibetan background; the third possesses an adequate knowledge of both languages. First a very literal translation was made, then the English was refined, after which the resulting text was compared very carefully with the original and all the obvious errors eliminated. Our purpose has been to make the English rendering as faithful as possible to the Tibetan within the limits imposed by the very different nature of the two languages. Here and there, the order of words has been changed slightly to accord with the demands of English style and syntax, but changes of this sort have been kept to a bare minimum.

We have undertaken this work to pay honor to a great Buddhist sage whose work has been of incalculable benefit to the Tibetan people. We are very conscious of our own shortcomings and crave forgiveness for whatever errors and inadequacies there may be. May the Buddha Dharma flourish and may the name of the great Atisha be long remembered in this world!

Bangkok, summer 1973

Preface to the Second Printing

The following preface is drawn with the kind permission of His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama from a good will message delivered at the conference on the one thousand year celebration of Atisha's birth.

The venerable Jowo Je Atisha was not only important to Indians, but he showed inconceivable kindness to Tibetans as well, and we should be especially mindful of him on this occasion in celebration of the millennium since his birth.

Buddhism was first introduced and developed in Tibet during the reigns of the three great kings (Songtsen Gampo, Trisong Deutson, and Ralpachen), when the Indian masters Shantirakshita and Padma Sambhava laid the foundations of the Sutrayana and Vajrayana teachings. The traditions they established almost disappeared during the rule of King Langdarma, and for more than seventy years after this, the sangha was non-existent. Although thereafter Lochen Rinchen Zangpo of Nga Ri and Lachen Gongpa Rabtsel of lower Tibet gradually built up the sangha again, there developed the attitude that the sutras and tantras were in total contradiction, like hot and cold. Moreover, because the meaning of the tantras was misconstrued, the monastic practice of moral discipline (vinaya) was endangered.

At this time there appeared the kings Yeshe Yod and Jangchub Yod, who were unable to bear the state into which Tibetan Buddhism had fallen. At great personal effort they sent Gyatsundru Senge and Nagtso Lotsawa to India to invite Atisha to Tibet.

The master Atisha arrived during the reign of Jangchub Yod, and he spent three years in Nga Ri, nine between Yerpa and Nyetang and then another five in various other places in central Tibet. Thus he dedicated the final years of his life to the cause of Dharma in Tibet, restoring it where it had disappeared, strengthening it where it still existed, and reforming it where wrong ideas had crept in. This he accomplished by means of disseminating the unmistakable oral transmission teaching whereby one individual can practice all aspects of the Buddha Dharma, including both the Sutrayana and Vajrayana, in a single session.

His teaching represented the very heart of all Buddha's words, combining the vast instructions given by Maitreya to Asanga and his brother Vasubhandu with the profound legacy transmitted by Manjushri to Nagarjuna and Aryadeva. Thus he established and disseminated the pure and stainless Buddha Dharma in both Hinayana and Mahayana aspects, the latter including the Vajrayana.

His tradition, which has come down to us today in an unbroken line of gurus beginning with his chief disciple Dromtonpa, came to be known as the Kadampa Order. Their trademark was this synthesis of the various vehicles (yanas), as expressed by their saying, "The external practice is moral discipline (i.e. Hinayana); the inner practice is the bodhi-mind (i.e. Mahayana); and, practiced in secret, is the secret mantra (i.e. Vajrayana)." In the Kadampa Order, these three were taken as interconnected, intersupportive aspects of training.

The fact that we today still have access to all aspects of the Sutrayana and Vajrayana paths is very much due to the work of the Venerable Atisha. Thus it is excellent if on this occasion we can honor him in our minds and offer prayers to him. More importantly, we should meditate on the sublimely altruistic bodhisattva spirit which is based on love and compassion. Atisha himself made this his principal practice, and he suggested to his disciples that they do the same. If we can follow this advice, perhaps his kindness will be repaid, at least in part, and his wishes fulfilled.

The Guru's Knowledge of the Origin of the Dharma by Gurugana Dharmakaranama

To those noble persons in whom the religion is rooted, I pay homage.

On living beings suffering from the scorching heat of affliction (klesha), the vault of Dharma showers clouds of loving kindness (maitri) and rains down compassion (karuna) that refresh those beset by afflictions' scorching heat. To that Dharma King, I bow my head.

From his ocean-vast and unsullied story, without additions for changes of any sort, to the best of my ability, I have gathered some drops. O give ear.

In the eastern part of India, in the country named Bengal (Sahor), the ruler was a religious king named Kalyana Shri. King Kalyana Shri brought the prosperity of his kingdom to its zenith. His palace had a golden victory banner encircled by countless houses and there were great numbers of bathing-pools encircled by 720 magnificent gardens, forests of Tala trees, seven concentric walls, 363 connecting bridges, innumerable golden victory banners, thirteen roofs to the central palace and thousands of noblemen in the palace.

All this splendour matched the King of Tonkun's (one of the Chinese kings); the dignity of the monarch's royal bearing and his air of great authority were like those of the great god Indra. His subjects were as numerous as the inhabitants of a city of Gandharas and their religious attainments could be compared to those of Aryadhama. Shri Prabhavati, the consort of this devout king, was like a goddess. She was a beautiful and chaste woman who worshipped the Triple Gem, and was beloved as a mother by all human beings. This queen had three sons, namely Shrigarbha, Chandragarbha and Padmagarbha. The story of these three is seldom to be found in other books. The second son, Chandragarbha, was my noble guru. At the auspicious moment of his birth, flowers rained down upon the city, a rainbow canopy appeared, and the gods sang hymns which brought gladness and joy to all the people. For eighteen months he resided in the capital and was excellently reared by eight nurses.

To the north of the palace there was a sacred place called Vikramashila Vihara. To make offerings [to give thanks for the Prince's birth] at that place, the King, Queen and their ministers, escorted by 500 chariots full of lovely girls elegantly adorned with ornaments and surrounded by hundreds upon hundreds of musicians, carried the innumerable jeweled articles necessary for the votive rite and all went to that place singing.

My infant guru, who already seemed like a child of three, had so many beauties of person that the eyes were, dazzled. The boy, having been crowned and adorned with god-like ornaments, was carried by his father wrapped in fine muslin garments. When the people saw him they felt so full of happiness that they could not tear themselves away. Those who stood by exclaimed:

"At the time of your birth, the tent of the sun was set up and melodious songs were heard by the people. So our most cherished desire was to meet you. And now, having seen you, we are filled with joyous awe."

Then the excellent Prince enquired:

"Who are these people, O parents?"

"These are your subjects, Prince," answered his parents.

Then the excellent Prince continued:

"May they be possessed of merit like that of my parents. May they rule kingdoms that reach the summit of prosperity. May they be reborn as sons of kings and may they be sustained by holy and virtuous deeds."

Then, when the royal procession came safely to the Vikramashila Vihara (the main chapel at that place of pilgrimage) the excellent Prince, having prostrated himself to the Triple Gem, recited this melodious song of praise:

"Having attained the noble body of a man, and being without defect in all organs, I shall adhere to the Triple Gem. Always, I shall take the Triple Gem upon my head with deep sincerity. Henceforward, may the Triple Gem be my refuge!"

When these words were heard by the King, Queen, ministers and monks, they were filled with joyful wonder and all declared with one voice that the Prince was destined for greatness. Then the King, Queen and attendants declared:

"May we, by gathering merits through paying reverence and making offerings, be able to make offerings to the Triple Gem from life to life. And, by the virtue of those merits, we pray for the long continuance of our religion, for which we shall make offerings to the sangha. O, may we be delivered from the sufferings caused by defilements."

When the Prince heard their words, he looked at his parents and exclaimed:

"May I never be bound by worldly ways. May I be taught the holy way of the monks and humbly worship the Triple Gem. May I feel pity for all beings."

His parents and the others felt full of wonder when they heard the sayings of the Prince. This was the first preaching of my guru. The Prince, by the age of three, had become well-versed in astrology, writing and Sanskrit. At six years, he was able to distinguish between the Buddhist and non-Buddhist doctrines. From then up to the age of ten years, he took the Triple Gem for refuge by observing the precepts (shilas) of the upasakas, bestowing charity (dana), studying happily, reciting prayers, seeking out people of noble character, obeying and serving his parents humbly and with sweet words, enjoying every sort of religious dance and sacred song, paying respect to holy men even from a distance, looking at worldlings with heart-felt pity, helping those who were wretched, and doing many such noble deeds. When the Prince reached the age of eleven years, the ministers and subjects brought twenty-one girls of noble parentage to him and the King and Queen presented them with valuable gifts.

One day the King summoned all his ministers and commanded:

"Beginning from tomorrow you must carefully prepare the thirteen royal chariots and adorn them beautifully with innumerable ornaments such as the people love, especially the most beautiful and strongest chariot which should be placed in the centre. On it you must pitch the peacock umbrella surrounded by fans. In the centre (under the peacock umbrella) place Chandragarbha clad in splendid garments on a beautifully jeweled throne. In the other twelve adorned chariots, all the ministers will be seated dressed in magnificent garments and accompanied by musicians with many kinds of instruments to play joyful songs.

"The procession will be led by three white chariots; there will be three red chariots to the rear, three yellow chariots on the right and three green chariots on the left. In each of the chariots place many youths and maidens with colored banners proper to the devas of the four directions. The Prince's chariot of five different colors should be ornamented at the four corners with carvings shaped like peacocks' necks and surrounded by girls dressed as goddesses bearing offerings. The other attendants should play melodious tunes upon such instruments as violins, drums and cymbals to delight the crowds who will gather on all sides. Beyond the great city in a pleasant garden must be set all sorts of amusements and games that will draw the people to assemble there. These amusements must last for a period of half a month so as to make all the people feel happy and contented. Among the assembly, there must be girls ready to delight the Prince, and the ministers must instruct them how to behave when the Prince's gaze lights upon them."

Thus the great King ordered the ministers to get ready thirteen adorned chariots within a week, with the chariot of the Prince in the middle, richly ornamented, and twelve chariots of musicians with instruments of all sorts.

Then beyond the great city at all the crossroads and in the gardens, the people began enjoying themselves with fascinating games. During the royal progress through all the quarters of the city to which Prince Chandragarbha and his 25,000 attendants proceeded in their chariots, the people in the lotus gardens adjacent to the capital and at every junction of the roads welcomed him like a universal king (a chakravartin) and all followed to gaze at the Prince. Prabhadevi and the other court ladies, the Prince's kinsmen and comrades, encouraged one another to hasten to see the gathering of people. When the people came crowding around the procession, the daughters of King Punnadhara, King Nemandhara, King Jalapati, King Pracandraprabha and other kings of high descent, noble physique and great possessions came armed, riding in twenty-two chariots, to join in the celebrations. In each of the chariots rode seven girls with seven maiden attendants. All these twenty-two chariots were adorned magnificently with diverse ornaments. The riders came singing melodious songs and in happy mood. The girls sat like goddesses, their lovelorn eyes fixed upon the Prince, for, at the sight of this youth, their passion was so great that the hair on their limbs stood up.

Suddenly, a goddess appeared, her complexion pale blue, and uttered the following admonition to the Prince:

"O, care not for power and be free from lust, most fortunate Prince. If, as an elephant sinks deeply into the swamp, you, a hero, were to sink in the mire of lust, would it not stain the shila robes you have worn in your past five hundred and fifty-two lives when you took the form of an undefiled pandita, a holy bhikshu? Therefore, as ducks seek out the lotus garden, seek you ordination in this life. The charming and lovely girls who live in this city are temptresses sent by mara (the evil one) to dispel your brilliant shila, thus they hope to betray you by showing you their passion. Know this, O handsome Prince! Like the moon reflected in the ocean, your purity gives forth brilliance, O Prince. Your head adorned with the five sacred jeweled ornaments puts a spell of fascination upon the people. Since you have attained a precious human body, so difficult to win, you should devote your life to hearing, pondering and practising (the Dharma) and, to set your doubts at rest, you should seek the guidance of innumerable gurus."

The Prince smiled and responded thus to the goddess's admonition:

"Oh wonderful! This is good, this is good, most excellently good! The wise delight in the (silence of the) forest, as peacocks thrive on poisonous plants or as ducks rejoice in the water of the lake. Just as crows revel in dirty places, so do ordinary people flock to the city. Whereas, like ducks hastening to the lotus pond, do people of wisdom seek the forest. How unlike ordinary people! So, in the past, was Prince Siddhartha repelled by the prosperous kingdom of Suddhodana as by a filthy swamp. He thereupon sought enlightenment, renouncing all his royal consorts. All humans and devas praised and worshipped him. Possessing the thirty-two glorious signs and eighty noble marks of a Dharma king, he attained buddhahood attended by the twelve holy states. Unless I renounce this kingdom, I shall increase the lust in the swamp of evil. All friends increase the lust in the swamp of evil. All friends are deceivers sent by mara. All wealth is but a salty river. Now by making good use of this body, I shall attain enlightenment. The enjoyment of pleasures stemming from desire is as empty as reflected moonlight, as fleeting as an echo, as illusory as a mirage, as dependent as a reflection. Into this vast ocean of affliction, the rivers of birth, decay, sickness and death flow unceasingly. In the past, I was bound by the karmic power of impure deeds, but today I am able to fulfill this life, so why not seek after Dharma? Determined to seek deliverance from worldly things, I shall devote myself to the noble Dharma under the guidance of my gurus."

When the people in that city heard the words of the Prince, they cried:

"Such utterances make it seem that this Prince will not reign over the kingdom; but if he were to reign, he would doubtless be a Dharma king; whereas, by seeking out many learned people and gurus, he will emulate the son of Shakya."

Thus the people around him shouted, full of joy and wonder, gazing at the Prince repeatedly, their eyes full of love. However, those highborn girls who had felt so happy when they saw the Prince, were shocked when they heard his words. Hastening to their parents, they spoke thus:

"The noble Prince has declared that he feels repelled by the world and will leave the kingdom to become a holy bhikshu, just as the Prince Siddhartha renounced his queen, and that he feels no attachment to his people. Now all of you, our parents and the rest, must hasten to the palace and do all that can be done by means of your great wealth so that the mind of the Prince will remain fixed upon the kingdom. This is what we girls now urge."

The ministers, parents and subjects did their utmost to please the Prince by bringing girls to dance and sing for him. Then the Prince gathered from the city and neighborhood one hundred and thirty armed horsemen clad in warrior's garb and went out hunting.

Presently he came upon a brahmin named Zitari who had the appearance of an arhant. Dwelling in a cave and dressed neatly and cleanly in a hermit's costume, he was singing a melodious song. The Prince, while still astride his horse, enquired:

"O hermit, by living in this solitary place, eating pure food and performing noble deeds, by renouncing goods and pleasures and observing a strict ascetic rule, what kind of knowledge have you gained?"

The hermit, without raising his eyes, answered the Prince thus:

"O Prince, the riches possessed by brahmins and royal persons are like summer flowers that soon decay; thus the power of karmic actions leads down to miserable, states. Residing here, I have learnt that riches will be of no profit in the next life. Fearing to be born in a filthy insect-haunted swamp, as a result of bestial behaviour suited to cattle, dogs and pigs, practising self-mortification, I dwell in this clean forest. Perceiving no value in illusory wealth, remembering the next life, I live now as a hermit."

On hearing those words the Prince spoke as follows, seeking to read the hermit's mind from his expression:

"Hermits are more arrogant than others, not bothering to rise even in the presence of royal persons."

The great hermit replied:

"What sort of royal person are you and from where do you come? Since I have no friends or enemies, I know nothing about you. I am happy without wealth in these forests. The only enemy in my life is Yama (the god of death) and, being free from pride, I have left off attending entertainments."

The Prince replied:

"I am from the Golden Victory Banner Kingdom and am a son of King Kalyana Shri. Today I have come to this forest to find out if there are disaffected people here and you have committed an offence by not recognizing a member of the royal family."

The great hermit continued:

"Is my staying apart from the race of humans an offence? I have no master, no servant, none to guard me. King, when you enter upon the next life, with no horse and no comrade, you will have to walk alone, hungry and naked, you will have to wander alone between death and rebirth. Your wanderings in unknown places, unknown countries, will go on and on. One day you will no longer be the son of a king. It is for reasons such as these that I stay in this solitary place."

On hearing these words, the Prince dismounted from his horse and offered him three gifts, namely servants, horses, and weapons. With hands reverently folded, he uttered the following stanzas:

"To test the knowledge of Your Reverence,
I uttered words that were: harsh and proud.
Now day and night I long to repent, being disgusted with worldly matters.
I pray you, O hermit, receive me (as your disciple)."

The great hermit answered:

"Come, may your mind be freed from the wind of pride.
May you become a leader of the shasana."

So saying, the hermit conferred upon him bodhicitta and the blessing of the Triple Gem. Then the Prince arose and offered the hermit chariots and other gifts in return for the blessing of the Triple Gem and the gift of bodhicitta.

The hermit, so as to enable the Prince to receive the full merit, took the offerings for a while. Then he uttered this admonition:

"O Prince, if without taking careful thought, you make offerings so as to solve present problems and thus achieve greatness in this life, that is a selfish way of which even foxes and wolves are capable. Enlightenment cannot be thus attained even by pratyekabuddhas. Even a servant can fill his mouth with food, but a king can never find satisfaction in this life. Therefore, O Prince, let zeal fill your heart, and seek enlightenment by renouncing the kingdom."

To this the Prince answered:

"I am chained by my royal consorts like a pampered prisoner. Above all, bound by the effects of my klesha, I am fondly held by kinsmen who all betray me by showing me their love. That is how I feel in this mirey world. Now I cannot bear the actions of the King. Therefore, O guru, bless me."

To these words, the great hermit replied:

"One of the world's great chains is high birth. The name most beloved of mara is 'king', mara's chief messengers are royal ministers. Certainly, the King's actions will soon cause you harm. So to Nalanda you must go. There lives one who has been your guru throughout lives since time immemorial, Bodhibhadra. Receiving from him bodhicitta and listening to the Dharma, there must you come face to face with truth. This learned man will be of great benefit to you."

So saying, the great hermit, having returned all the offerings continued:

"Come back to me here when you become a monk. I will guide you with much good advice."

Then the Prince, having quickly returned to his capital, took gold, silver and great wealth with which he proceeded to Nalanda followed by his attendants. The King of Nalanda tremblingly came to receive the Prince while still at a distance with his troops and attendants. When they met, he uttered these noble words:

"O Prince, from whence have you come? And where did you take birth, you who are like a chakravartin? And where will you go to subdue the enemies of the excellent Dharma? I, seeing you from afar, have come to receive you."

The Prince replied:

"I have come from the land of East Bengal, the Palace of the Golden Victory Banner. Now I go to subdue the enemy, samsara. To subdue the mara of death I go!"

"You are a son of the King of East Bengal, the pious King Kalyana Shri, the king who like a chakravartin has been victorious over many evils. It is good fortune that the son of such a king has come to this land of mine. Your Vikramashila Vihara is like the palace of a divinity in paradise. To renounce so wonderful a place is beyond imagination; the pandits there are as brilliant as the sun and moon. Why, then, have you come here to seek some other teacher, O great Prince?"

The excellent Prince responded:

"In the great religious institution of Nalanda —like an ocean whose vast expanse is filled with gems – among the pandits numerous as the stars, there lives the most excellent and venerable Bodhibhadra, whom the hermit foretold will be my guru. I pray you, O King, do not reject me!"

Then the King of Nalanda replied:

"Great indeed is the excellent Bodhibhadra! Like snow-clad Mount Tise, motionless, giving forth radiance! As the god of wealth is rich in possessions, so is Bodhibhadra rich in noble followers. I pray you come now to celebrate these joyful tidings with pleasant entertainment."

"Excellent," uttered the noble Prince.

Then the King of Nalanda, with a procession of those who had come to welcome the Prince, proceeded to Nalanda to the accompaniment of music. To the south of Nalanda, there was a palace called Samantabhadra Prasada in a place known as Padamadesh, encircled by innumerable houses. In this place the Prince was invited to seat himself on the beautifully decorated jeweled throne and the King of Nalanda himself served and praised His Highness.

Thereafter they went to guru Bodhibhadra in Nalanda. Entering the monastery, the Prince felt exceedingly happy upon meeting his guru. So also did the noble guru Bodhibhadra, on hearing of the Prince's coming, feel full of joy and, rising from his mat, he uttered the following sweet Dharma words:

"So you have come, O son of Dharmaraj! Does our religion flourish in Bengal? Has not the long journey made you tired?"

The Excellent Prince answered:

"My father is in good health and I have come here to seek the Dharma. And after a safe journey, I have met you today, O learned expounder of the teaching of Buddha. Are you not weary of listening, thinking and meditating?"

To these words, the guru replied:

"I too am well. Day and night I flourish by the blessing of the holy Dharma. Be seated, O excellent Prince, and tell me what you need."

Thereupon the Prince prostrated himself reverently and, by his offerings of jewels, pleased the guru. Then, in humble tones, he cried:

"Compassionately listen to my words, O teacher of all beings! I could not bear the swamp of suffering that is samsara. Fearing to suffer through the snare of a great kingdom, I went with some armed companions to the forest. There I came upon the guru Zitari who was dwelling there. Then I prayed to him for the gift of bodhicitta and, by the graciousness of that high pandit, I was sent to this great religious institution of Nalanda. There, said the hermit, blessed by divinity in previous lives, dwells the noble guru Bodhibhadra. From him seek the blessing of bodhicitta. Immediately I went to my

palace and took gifts for offerings. Today I have arrived. In your compassion be kind to me and bestow on me bodhicitta and many blessings."

Then the Prince immediately sat down. The guru, entering a state of meditation, gave the blessing of right action of body, speech and mind together with bodhicitta and other blessings. Then he delivered the following admonition:

"O Prince. Make good use of this life. Unless you seek deliverance by renouncing the kingdom, when your karma leads you to fall into evil states, it will be too late to regret. This life is a precious opportunity to establish the strong foundation of all lives. If you do not make gigantic efforts, but waste this valuable opportunity to obtain deliverance, O honored Prince, you will not be able to gain it in the future. However well equipped and courageous you may be, when the messenger of death leads you along the narrow path to the beyond (the next life), no power, no protector, no repentance you may have will be of any benefit. O Excellent Prince! This is the Dharma to be pondered.

"To the north of Nalanda, there lives one who has been your guru in your previous lives since time immemorial. Known as Prince Bodhikoyal, he has spent all his life meditating in solitary places. Unsullied by the filth of the eight extremes, he is clad in shila and prophetic power. Approach him and receive his Dharma teaching."

The Prince, having heard these admonitions of the guru, sadly left the valuable Bodhibhadra for the noble Bodhikoyal, to whom he prostrated himself and made offerings, saying:

"I am a son of East Bengal. Setting forth from the Palace of the Golden Victory Banner, I made my way to the monastery of Nalanda and there received bodhicitta from the venerable Bodhibhadra. The Venerable One admonished me: 'Stay not here, but go to the northern side where dwells one who has been your guru in many lives since, time immemorial, the venerable Bodhikoyal by name. Approach him and receive the blessing of bodhicitta. This Venerable One will be of great benefit to you!' Thereafter, I sadly left my noble guru and have come joyfully to be near you, O teacher! I cannot bear the actions of my father. You, noble guru, must bless me."

Full of joy, the eminent guru uttered these words:

"It is excellent that the Prince has come. Draw near, you who are to me as my own self, and receive my blessing. Of the Dharma's true nature I shall preach to you, out of my love."

Then the Prince, having prostrated himself and presented many offerings, humbly sat down upon the mat. The venerable Bodhikoyal administered bodhicitta and uttered the following stanzas as the gist of his profound teaching:

"O Prince! Even though perfectly endowed with the three possessions (grace, glory and wealth) in this present life, were you to neglect to make your life meritorious, your possessing a noble human body would be of no avail. And how regrettable it would be if you forfeited the wealth of lives to come. O Prince! As the noble Nagarjuna once said: 'All things both external and internal, are void, dreamlike, illusory, Whosoever fails to ponder these two truths will be swallowed up by samsara's filthy mire! O Prince! You must fix your concentration on the void (shunyata), insubstantial as the sky. But when, after meditation, you feel that all things resemble a mirage, then ponder karma and its results."

Thus did the guru transmit the profound Dharma, whereupon the Prince attained the prayogamarga (the path of endeavour, which is the second of five stages) and also surangama samadhi (the contemplation leading to power). Uttering these words, he described what he had perceived:

"O guru! On entering samadhi, I perceived (a state of voidness) like a cloudless sky, radiant, pure and clear. Is that the nature of the Dharma, O guru? Then, after coming forth from meditation, I was troubled by no attachment, but longed to be of benefit to sentient beings. I recognize the reality of karma, even though all objects are revealed as illusions. O guru, is my practice without error?"

The guru answered:

"Fortunate man. You are a product of accumulated merit. As a bhikshu I do not exaggerate or pervert the truth. Although at the time of concentration one perceives that all objects share the voidness of the sky, one must lift up all beings through compassion after the concentration has been performed. This is an exposition of two truths (absolute and relative). It is my most precious teaching. Now, if you desire to renounce your kingdom, to the south of the black mountain's peak dwells my guru Avadhuti. He, was also your guru in previous lives. Go and obtain the bestowal of bodhicitta from him and receive the admonition that will lead you to renounce the kingdom."

On hearing the words of that guru, the Prince, though reluctant to depart, joined his attendants in happily paying their last homage. Thereafter, they went on their way as though escorting a great hero. While they were proceeding, the King of Nalanda presented innumerable precious objects and, followed by his train, escorted the Prince for as much as three miles. Before the King departed, the Prince spoke the following affectionate words:

"Although you are clad in a noble body, O King, were you not to subdue the enemy, samsara, later, when led in bonds by the executioners—well! That would be sad indeed! Therefore, cherish your wealth of Dharma. Although your good-heartedness made our meeting possible, that is perishable by nature and vanishes like customers from a fair. Do not consider my departure a loss, but remember the love I bear you, and try hard to come into accord with religion, soon."

The King replied:

"Our meeting today has been the most excellent good fortune. I am deeply moved to have encountered you, son of a religious king. Your setting forth from here saddens me more than the departure of my own son, but I pray we may soon meet again."

Then the Prince went to the south of the Black Mountain's peak to the venerable Avadhuti. He discovered the noble guru dwelling beneath the shelter of that dark peak clad in a black blanket that covered his whole body. He was seated on the skin of a spotted antelope with a string of meditation beads adorning his breast. His frame was bulky and his belly corpulent. His eyes were pale red, his complexion blue, and it was his habit to sit with one leg partly extended. Though devoid of worldly possessions, he bore a skull in which sentient beings were collected. Though he was often seen in that place, he had no definite dwelling.

The Prince dismounted while still at a distance and, bowing low, approached the guru, followed by his attendants. The guru, meeting him with a fixed glare, spoke as follows:

"Has your inner pride been entirely broken yet?
Are you not tortured by maras?
Are you not stuck in the swamp of your kingdom?
Are you not cheated by mara's daughters?
Has your noble body not withered yet?
And why do you come here like the son of a king?"

The Prince prostrated himself and replied:

"From the land of East Bengal have I come.
Free from longing for my kingdom, have I come.
To obtain protection from samsara have I come.
To the great religious institution of Nalanda I went,
And received refuge from the venerable Bodhikoyal.
That guru has sent me to you.
Now may you give me refuge?"

To these words the venerable Avadhuti replied:

"O man! Since you have taken birth as one of royal descent, what terrifying heaps of affliction you must have! Could you, throwing off your kingdom as one spews forth spittle, bear the actions of Avadhuti? The wealth of a kingdom is nothing but a lake of poison! Taste but one drop and your liberation will be imperiled! The wealth of a kingdom is nothing but a pit of fire! One touch will make you suffer cruelly. Go back now to your kingdom, and return to me soon after contemplating its miseries."

The Prince, on hearing these words of the guru, paid his respects and set forth for his kingdom. The people, on seeing their Prince, laughed with delight, danced joyfully and gave themselves to song and music. When the Prince arrived at the palace, the King and Queen, rejoicing, asked:

"Where have you been O Chandragarbha?
Are you not fatigued?
Did you not suffer by seeing so much misery?
It is good that you have come home."

The Prince answered his parents fully:

"I went to engage in mirthful sports at every place.
I went to find out the way to subdue the enemies of religion.
I went to seek a guru able to give me protection.
I went in search of solitary places amidst mountains and rocks.
I saw the defects of samsara in every place I went.
All with whom I associated told me of its evils.
Nothing I did brought me peace of mind.
Now I will go back to seek after Dharma.
O my parents, give me this opportunity!"

To this, his parents answered:

"O son! If you feel distressed by samsara, make offerings to the Triple Gem by reigning over your kingdom, by satisfying the needs of those who are wretched with fond

commiseration. Always erecting monasteries. Meditate on compassion (karuna) and on loving kindness (maitri) without partiality. All will be made happy by your behaving in this way."

The Prince responded:

"Listen, Father, if you love me! Here in this palace of golden jewels, enmeshed by beves of consorts whose charms are so hard to resist, I shall suffer support the sangha by and on loving-kindness bitterly. Looking upon this samsara, I recollect the sufferings of all beings. As for attachment to this kingdom, I shall regret it no more than a drop of spittle. Day and night, I have thought over the defects of this kingdom. However lovely those deceiving girls of mara may be, I experience not the least desire. Looking upon those illusory things, I recognize that, between three pure substances such as curd, milk and butter, or three sweet foods such as sugar, molasses and honey, and, on the other hand, such unclean filth as leprous persons, dog-flesh, pus and blood, there is not a particle of difference. Between splendid garments, beautiful turquoises and corals, or the lovely ornaments of devas, and tattered and unclean rags there is not a shred of difference.

In order to contemplate dhyana, to the forest I shall go.
In the eight cemeteries shall I disport myself!
To the place of yogis, I go
To seek out solitude where true happiness can be enjoyed.
Giving up all attachment and treating everything impartially,
I go to be a mendicant.
To the lofty mountain peaks, I go
To the guru Avadhuti, I go.
To the place of yogis, I go
To sip the essence of the Vajrayana.
To the country of Udyana, I go.
To make friends with the dakinis of wisdom, I go
I go to the heaven of Akanishta.
To bow at the foot of Vairochana, I go.
I go to the heaven of Tushita.
To serve the noble guru, I go.
I go to all the heavens.
To perform devotional rites, I go.
I go to the Arya heaven, to Sukhavati (the paradise of happiness) to enjoy delight, I go.
Do not bind me, do not bind me, O King Kalyana Shri.
Permit me to go to a place of salvation, O Father, if you love me.
Do not bind me, do not bind me, O Queen Shri Prabhavati!
Permit me to embrace religion, O Mother, if you love me!
Give me now a little rice and wine, meat, milk, molasses and honey,
And other such provisions.
I go to the venerable Avadhuti and there, propitiating him.
I shall be able to subdue my mind."

As the noble Prince sang these words into the ears of his parents, they seemed to hear the song of a Ghandarava king which bemuses the minds of all people. The parents, bemused by the Prince's song, gave him everything he wished, making no reply. Then taking the rice and wine and other provisions, the Prince went off to the forest with a train of one thousand horsemen and pleased the venerable Avadhuti by his offerings. To the guru they reverently folded their hands

and prostrated themselves at his feet. The guru thereupon administered bodhicitta and blessed them with the admonitions of the Mahayana. At that time it seemed the Prince was like a chakravartin ruler, protected from danger by his retinue of guards and soldiers riding their horses amidst the forest and uttering martial shouts. Pressing round him and about him, they guarded him and made him offerings of music and of song.

After blessing them, the guru commanded:

"Go to the Black Mountain. To the noble and blissful Vajrayogi, he who has propitiated the Lord of Death by serving him as an attendant spirit. To that noble rahula you must go. Obtain bodhicitta and glorious admonitions from him. He, too, was your guru in previous lives. Stay not here, but go on your way happily."

On hearing the guru's words, the Prince, like a great hero going forth to battle, rode off with his thousand horsemen who, well accoutred with shields and helmets, made martial music and flourished axes, hammers and short spears. As they rode to the monastery, they let fly arrows and their shouts rang out upon all sides.

In Black Mountain Monastery, there lived countless yogis and yoginis. While the august Vajrayogi was expounding the Tantra to his disciples, he saw the young Prince Chandragarbha coming. Although he knew that the Prince had come to seek religious teaching, the merciful one, for the purpose of giving him a warning, cast a thunderbolt in his direction. The missile, instead of falling to the earth, flew towards a stupa on Black Mountain. In great amazement, the disciples asked:

"Why has the Prince come with an army to visit the guru?"

Whereupon the guru replied:

"Having passed through five hundred and fifty-two lives as a bhikshu undefiled, a great pandita most learned, this man has taken birth excellently in Bengal as the son of King Kalyana. Even to such a great kingdom and to such throngs of subjects, he is not attached, but longs to practise austerities. On the peak of this mountain dwells Avadhuti and, as prophesied by him, the Prince has arrived here today. Is this not wonderful, O my disciples?"

When the guru had spoken these words, all of them cried out:

"Wonderful! Blessed is this day on which the great hero has come!"

Then all rose and welcomed the Prince while he was still at a distance. When he dismounted, so did his thousand horsemen. Then, entering the palace of the guru, the Prince reverently prostrated himself and said:

"I pray you listen to me, exalted guru. Although I desire to attain liberation by renouncing my home, I am burdened by my so-called royal descent; I am in danger of being bound to the kingdom of Bengal. Zitari, Bodhibhadra, Bodhikoyal and Avadhuti, to all these gurus who have attained wisdom, higher knowledge and spiritual power, I have attended. Yet still I have not been liberated from my kingdom. Now I have been sent by them to you, O guru. Bless me with the power of bodhicitta and deliver me from the chains of my kingdom!"

Then the noble guru took the Prince close to the mandala and, bestowing the power of Shri Hevajra, secretly named him Janna-guhey-vajra. Day and night, the guru showered upon him the rain of admonition and followed this by an empowerment (abhisheka) that lasted a full thirteen days, during which time none of his attendants slept, but strolled about, playing, singing, dancing and enjoying many kinds of music. These attendants thought only of when the Prince would emerge. When the thirteen days had elapsed, the Prince came forth wearing the dress of Heruka (a fierce divinity or yogic form) and, on seeing his attendants, sang them hymns of exhortation. Gazing upon his three possessions (servants, horses and weapons), he perceived them all to be worthless. Then did he utter the following stanza:

"All things are in a state of absolute stillness like the sky.
All things are empty as an echo among hollow rocks.
A kingdom is worthless as riches in a dream.
Attendants are deceivers like covens of magicians.
If I do not seek deliverance by renouncing all these, I am not blessed, despite my accumulated merits. Day and night, in contemplating the nature of all phenomena and in listening ever (to the Dharma), I shall exert unremitting effort."

Then suddenly there appeared many (divine) yogis and yogini, such as Hevajra Yogi, Karma Yogini, representing the nature of impermanence, Vira Yogi, a master of higher knowledge and spiritual power, and eight fearful male and female naked ascetics, grasping in one hand flutes fashioned of human thighbones and, in the other, human limbs at which flesh they gnawed as they shouted: "HUM!" and "PHAT!" These danced around the Prince, giving him this admonition:

"Hasten to Bengal and convert the mind of the King. Make him understand why you have renounced the kingdom, O Prince! Let him take you to the noble personage, yogi Avadhuti. There, put on rough cloth and sustain your life on coarse food. Abandon your mat of embroidered silk and sit on the fur of an antelope. Give up your horses and attendants and learn to travel alone as a mendicant. Do not fear, do not fear, when you are seeking liberation; particularly now that you are cutting off the mighty adversary! Go now, our guru (Hevajra) thus orders you!"

Then the Prince, having put on his hermit's costume, mounted his horse, surrounded by his thousand horsemen. On the way back, he sang the following Vajrayana verses:

"In the absolute non-being (voidness) of Citta-vajra,
I have sought the imperishable Vajrayana.
O most delightful Vajra,
My thought springs up to thy noble dignity.
By the clarity and purity of the Deva-vajra, the shadow of karma is reflected,
but freed from all imperfect action.
By the power of the Ratna-vajra of the Kaya mandala,
I an gaze upon the Anatta-vajra without fear.
By the perfect wisdom of the Guheya-vajra,
May I surely be victorious in the battle over samsara."

When the Prince had concluded this song of Vajra, the four great court ministers, Mahamantri Shura-vajra, Mahamantri Shatru Prabhanca, Mahamantri Jayatiraj and Mahamantri Abhaya, sang sadly:

"How powerful is karma in this world!

In that excellent land, Bengal, of which all people speak with delight,
How great is the prosperity of its capital!
Pleasant to see is the Golden Banner.
Magnificent are King Kalvana and Shri Prabhavati, the mother of its people.
Yet renouncing his counsellors, ministers and subjects like phantoms,
The noble Prince prefers to dwell in the forest.
Abandoning his horses, chariots, elephants,
He will walk barefoot like a commoner!
Putting off his god-like ornaments and garments.
He will clothe himself in common garb!
Abandoning his peacock-ornamented throne,
He will stretch an antelope's skin on the floor of a hovel!
Indifferent to the goddess-like beauty of the women in his kingdom,
He will wander in cemeteries, devouring the flesh of corpses!
We felt such happiness on seeing you when you took birth.
After living with us so joyfully, how can you leave us?"

Singing this sad song, the ministers came (with the Prince) to the capital and, upon their arrival at the palace, all the people heard what they were singing. Gazing at them they saw them, looking like the Guardian Deities of the ten directions going forth to war, so awe-inspiring, courageous and mightily armed. The sight was greatly astonishing and full of beauty and allurements. The attendants made such a great noise with their hurlyburly that even the Prince himself was awestruck.

For three whole months the ministers wore their warriors' array and kept their horses saddled. Some raced on horseback, others played in dramas and sang. Some armed themselves with new weapons as if going forth to war. Yogis and yoginis pranced about and the Prince behaved like a madman in the centre of the capital, causing all his subjects to recognize that he would not reign over the kingdom. So the people stood weeping. As though wild beasts had come howling to devour the people's flesh, his parents fell to bitter lamentation, particularly the father, who cried:

"At the time of your auspicious birth, We saw such marvelous prodigies that I made sure you would reign over the kingdom. And accordingly my mind was filled with delight. Now what thoughts are these that make you wish to leave for the forest?"

To this, the Prince replied:

"Pray listen to me, O religious King! If I reigned over the kingdom as you command, Though I should naturally be with you for a while in this life, we, father and son, would never meet again in all the lives to come. How shameful it would be, were I to stay and bring you not benefit but harm! It is sure that, if by renouncing this mighty kingdom I shall accomplish the path of liberation, then in all lives to come gladly shall we meet again. Therefore, I implore you to give me that opportunity."

Then the mother cried:

"What is the use? Much though I grieve, his karma has greater weight. Well! Send this noble looking youth to practise religion wherever he may go. I pray that we shall soon be together always."

The Prince, when morning dawned, went to the forest with the yogis and, encountering Avadhuti, practised asceticism, and learned all the Dharma of madhyamarga without attachment.

From the age of twelve to eighteen he practised asceticism with Avadhuti by listening, thinking and meditating on one mat. Thus did this Holy One of great compassion perform hundreds of varied austerities. Renouncing his unimaginably mighty kingdom like a drop of spittle, he attained complete liberation.

Since there exists no one to rival your accomplishment, I have found in you the most successful master of religion. I, Dromtonpa, bowing my head, shall humbly pay you homage until the end of samsara. I pray you, O Greatly Compassionate One, to forgive me whatever exaggeration or perversion of truth there may be in this book.

Thus ends the summary, selected from the ocean of my guru's deeds, setting forth the virtuous actions whereby he accomplished liberation through the renunciation of his kingdom.

Atisha's Journey to Suvarnavipa
by Gurugana Dharmakaranama

Salutations to Arya Maitreya and Avalokiteshvara. I, Bhikshu Dipankara Shrijnana (Atisha) set out on a visit to the guru Suvarnavipa, a voyage that lasted for thirteen months. When five months had gone by, a son of Maheshvara, desiring to disrupt my bodhicitta, sent forth a tempest of contrary winds and a huge leviathan that blocked the way forward. Moreover, thunderbolts were hurled upon me from the sky. Whereupon, by fixing my contemplation on loving kindness and compassion, I calmed the tempest and the six great thunderbolts were seen forming a pattern in the sky. But still the leviathan blocked the way forward and, owing to the violence of the waves raised by that strong tempest, the ship trembled and leapt up like a banner whipped by the wind. Sometimes it leapt towards the sky and sometimes sank into the ocean as if thrown, so that the four great sails were blown away, even though four massive lumps of bronze had been cast down to the sea-bed as anchors. Then, as though great drums were being beaten in the four directions, there came a deafening noise; lightning and thunder terrified my trembling attendants. Again, while I was contemplating loving kindness and compassion, the pandita Bhumisara prayed thus to me, his guru:

"Rise up, rise up O merciful guru.
Assuredly you must have enemies on this earth,
Else why was this dreadful phenomenon created by forces hostile to religion?
Pray, out of your great compassion, calm the tempest.
If it is destined that all beings are to be freed from the ocean of samsara
Why are the evil ones allowed to afflict us so?
Alas! See how the tempest blows and thunderbolts upon us!
See the huge leviathan blocking our way forward! Pray save us from this danger.
See how the ocean is blown by the wind.
And the waves mount up to the sky!
Dreadful is this thunderous din, dreadful this red lightning!
Ah, how the ship shakes with the sea's buffeting,
Swinging up towards the sky and hurtling down into the ocean troughs!
Pray Lord, save us from this terror.
Drawn by your knowledge unlimited as the sky,
The hosts of attendants and guardians of religion flock to you like eagles.
If these beings flying round in the sky are able to annihilate obstacles,
Why do they not protect us in the face of obstacles today?
How uncompassionate they are, those dwellers in solitary places!
Now ye dakinis and guardians of the Dharma, who protect both tantric adepts and the others,
Ye heroes and heroines, subduers of hostile forces and gods of wisdom,
Ye gods who protect the virtuous and now encircle us on every side, here in this great ocean,
Pray by your merciful powers, drive back our enemies!
May the victorious tutelary deity, Red Bhagavan (Yama, god of death),
Invincible to foes and surrounded by his fearful licitors,
May the faithful attendants of the ten angry spirits,
The protectors from eight fears, the devi of blessings and prosperity,
All come to aid our holy guru! O exalted Buddha, lord of the Dharma.
O spotless lord Avalokiteshvara,
Ye who assuage the sufferings of all beings like holy rulers, father and son,
The time has come to support your kindred by your great compassion !

Rain down the pure water of your blessing continuously."

Clearly I heard them uttering this marvellous prayer. Thereupon I transformed myself into the Bhagavan Yamaraj, with red complexion, mighty belly, darkish bristling hair, red eyes surveying the ten directions. Like me, other deities raised their weapons in fierce postures. Our right hands grasped vajras raised towards the sky; our left hands held nooses pointed in wrathful gestures (mudra). Thence we hurled the vajras, which, wheeling through the sky, crashed upon the mountains, smashing them to pieces, and then plunged into the depths of the golden earth. Simultaneously the great ocean was so shaken that the water boiled up red with the blood of the leviathan, whose bones were stripped of flesh. Then that creature appeared on the ship in the guise of a young girl of pale complexion. Having bowed down, she spoke these words with folded hands:

"O, King of Wrath! possessed of mighty powers,
Supremely merciful, sole protector of all beings,
I am sick with terror. Now I pray you, spare me in your great compassion!"

Then, taking a vajra-sceptre in my hands, I cried:

"HUM! I am the master of all that lives.
Mine is the power of great compassion and therefore have I not destroyed you.
Henceforth to my disciples you shall not preach the heretic religion, nor the words of
fortune-tellers or liar priests nor any false doctrine, for I am the master of your life!"

Thereupon she spoke in a melodious voice, saying:

"O greatly compassionate lord, listen to me.
To the followers you convert, I shall never preach the false religion.
Therefore, I beg you to bestow your affectionate regard on me, since my life is in your
power."

When she had spoken thus, a white-complexioned man appeared from near the galley and uttered the following stanzas:

"Do not make the journey to the Himalayas, Nor sail in this ship, Balpo, to the islands
of Tamradvipa or elsewhere. Cease your journeying! Put a halt to your voyage!"

Then was heard a (divine) voice crying:

"Droom Hri Yasha!"

The tempest, waves, lightning and thunder all subsided and the great ship rode tranquilly. The ship's company regained their senses and engaged in joyful talk among themselves. Then I, the guru, still in the form of wrathful Yama, perambulated the deck and affixed the vajra-bolt to the vessel. Thereupon the great ship came to a standstill, motionless as an island; and, on going to discover the cause, I heard the laughing voices of some maidens and peered about to find them. Then, still determined and in the guise of the Wrathful King, I stepped into the ocean, which came only to my knees and drove the boat forward from east to west like a young man handling a wooden trough, the crown of my head lost among the clouds. From the sides of the ship, twenty-one maidens [Twenty-one forms of the goddess Tara], looking backwards, cried;

"If we sisters had not been here, would you have been so powerful today?"

To them I prayed:

"Salutations to the Tara who gives protection from the eight fears!
Salutations to the Tara who intensifies prosperity.
Salutations to the Tara who blocks the gates leading to undesirable states.
Salutations to the Tara who leads beings to the path of heaven.
Always we have been protected by you and still we seek your refuge."

To this prayer, the ladies replied:

"If you had not been here, we should have gone to Savabhavana,
the city of heretics to smash it to atoms,
Then hearing the sound of your prayer, we stopped to discover who it was.
Really you are the noblest among all beings.
Therefore have we, too, come here to support you.
Oh let not the power of this pale young girl wax stronger.
It would lead to great disasters. Never let this youth out of this ship, Balpo, from now on."

Then calling upon Bhumisara [Atisha's chief disciple] they cried:

"Reverend one, cast these flowers of the sky upon Savabhavana and we who belong to an order of beings strongly inclined (to religion) will accept bodhicitta and seek refuge in the Triple Gem."

Hearing this, pandita Bhumisara, making a threatening sign with his fingers, picked up a vajra-bolt. and sent it wheeling through the sky to Savabhavana, the city of heretics in the north, where Devi Caracaka dwelt, obliterating the temple and the goddess. Again he cast a vajra-bolt upon the dwelling of the Maheshvara and smashed it to the ground. A part of its flash struck that king of heretics and destroyed half his body. Another flash of lightning fell upon the palace of the ruler of the Turuks and interrupted communications between the Mongols and Buddha Gaya for thirteen years. One flash of lightning fell on the black tent of the Shangshung King and demolished the devotees of Bonpo, except for one or two survivors who fled to the Himalaya mountains. One flash of lightning destroyed the black palace in the southern poisonous ocean and blocked the progress of the malady called cancer. One flash of lightning fell upon Lanka and smashed the palace of Lanka's cannibal demon king to pieces, whereupon the eating of human flesh ceased.

Then Bhumisara uttered these words of pride:

"I am the master of this earth.
I shall smash the forces of evil to the ground.
The Great Hero [Atisha] is my master.
King Hayagriva, who neighs fearfully in the land of Udyana,
Destroy and pulverize Maheshvara into dust.
And utterly demolish the power of the Bonpo's deities!
OM Padma Takrita Vajra Krota Hayava Hulu Hulu HUM PHAT!"

This utterance I heard. Then after a while, the Bhagavan Yamaraj vanished and I changed myself into a holy bhikshu. My followers fell into an ecstasy of rejoicing and thus they prayed:

"You, the spiritual king, can be likened to the jewelled mountain,
which sprang forth miraculously and was not made by human hands.
By the power of your glorious wisdom signs,
Make us enjoy profound satisfaction.
Excellent, O master of power!
Go with us over this ocean,
Lord, and, when danger threatens,
We shall take shelter at your feet.
Pray be sure to save us!"

After that, for twenty-one days we dared not proceed, but when the, fear of danger was past, we raised the four great sails and drew up the bronze anchors into the ship. Then, sailing with a favourable wind day and night, we spent two and a half months continuously on the great ocean. Again, seven months (from the start of our voyage) the tempest assailed the bow of our ship, driving it back for a distance of about one day's voyage. However, the tempest subsided on our praying to the Triple Gem, the dakinis and protectors of Dharma. But, as no favourable wind blew, we had to stay in that place for a half month, which was due to our accumulation of evil karma. Again taking maitri, karuna and bodhicitta as the objects of our contemplation as before, we sailed with a good wind and thus reached land after sailing for another two months and twenty-six days.

This ends the summary of how Atisha encountered difficulties in his quest for his guru and the Dharma and of how he defeated the Maheshvara of the ocean.

Salutations to Arya Maitreya and Avalokiteshvara. After crossing the great ocean, we approached the six meditator disciples of guru Suvarnavipa dwelling at the Golden Stupa of Sukhagati established by a Tibetan king. It was surrounded by the Suvarnavipa forest in the north, by beautiful lotus in the south, by thick bamboo forest in the west and by crocodile country in the east. There we lived with them for fourteen days making detailed enquiries about guru Suvarnavipa, such as to what degree of Dharma he had attained, which tradition the immaculate monk followed, how much knowledge of scriptures he possessed, the depth of his comprehension of that knowledge, and so on. All these enquiries were addressed to the meditators. The meditators narrated to us the life story of their guru without additions and exaggerations. Thereafter we felt as much joy as if we had attained the parthama bhumi (the ten stages of saintly perfection of a bodhisattava).

The meditators, too, made enquiries about my life story from pandita Bhumisara and the others, who related how I had entered into the sangha after renouncing my kingdom, and how I had mastered the countless scriptures after attending innumerable gurus. When they described the vastness of the knowledge that their master possessed, the meditators asked:

"Well, this great pandita is an Indian abbot known by the name of Dipankara Shrijnana [Another of Atisha's names] is he not?"

Bhumisara replied:

"Yes, he bears the name of the second Buddha, well known on this earth. Highly honoured is he by all the fifty-two famous panditas. Admired is he by followers of the schools of Buddhism, both the Greater and Lesser. Well-famed indeed is the name of our great Indian abbot!"

The meditators continued:

"How excellent that the master of the earth has come here to this place. Hearing his sweet voice, we feel moved to see him. We are fortunate to be here on the day that the great scholar has arrived by ship. Were you not obstructed by mara on the way? Did you come to no harm from leviathans or storm? And, during the long voyage, did not shortage of food cause you trouble?"

Bhumisara replied:

"During our voyage of thirteen months, the great Maheshvara sent forth a leviathan to oppose us and raised a great tempest. By our immediately fixing our contemplation on loving kindness and compassion, Mara was subdued and all was well again. Sailing once more in our ship, our Lord entered the Akashakosh samadhi and all evil forces grew tranquil, so no fatigue has fallen upon his one hundred and twenty-five followers."

The meditators, on hearing these words from pandita Bhumisara, came to me in great joy and uttered this humble discourse:

"We heard of your reputation even from very far away.
Now that we have the happiness to meet you, we are full of joy.
Now, the great pandita has come here among us and we, so deep was the darkness of our ignorance, did not even know of your approach.
Now with body, speech and mind, we pay you most humble respects."

So saying they prostrated themselves at my feet. I, in return, having relinquished pride, paid homage to them. Again, the meditators enquired:

"For what particular purpose has the great pandita come here?
We are here to help you; so pray let us know."

I replied:

"I have come to the princely Suvarnadvipa,
I have come to make full use of this noble endowment of a human body.
Therefore, all of you must soon approach the guru and pray him to fulfil my desire."

Thereupon, the meditators went to the noble guru Suvarnadvipa and said to him:

"Pray listen to us, noble guru. Today, there has come to this island an Indian abbot called Dipamkara Shrijnana together with his one hundred and twenty-five followers. Sailing across the vast ocean for thirteen months, they subdued maras, heretics and the great Maheshvara by contemplating maitri and karuna. They arrived at the place where we stay with no sign of fatigue of body, speech or mind and we, having listened to his Dharma discourses for fourteen days, are filled with rejoicing and delight. Now, he desires to pay you a visit. The great pandita wishes to study the Prajnaparamita (the Wisdom Teachings) which have given birth to all the buddhas of the three periods, and also to develop bodhicitta and the accomplishments that stem therefrom to the stage of highest bliss. He desires, too, to practise the Mahayana and also other doctrines culled from the ocean of the guru's teaching, day and night continuously. Therefore, in your great compassion, grant him this opportunity."

On hearing these words, guru Suvarnadvipa thus replied:

"Excellent, the master of earth has come!
Excellent, the son of the king has come!
Excellent, the lord of all beings has come!
Excellent, the great hero has come!
Excellent, he has arrived with his followers!
Excellent, he has overcome all obstacles!
Excellent, he has won a vast reputation!
Excellent, he has come in full sincerity!
O monks, put on your robes and prepare the reception of this noble one."

Presently five hundred and thirty-five monks clad in three robes of similar color stood holding holy water vases and metal cymbals, looking as impressive as arhants. As they were accompanied by sixty-two novices, led by guru Suvarnavipa, they totalled five hundred and ninety-seven persons who had renounced the world. From far away, we could see them standing in line to receive us.

Thereupon we experienced the utmost pleasure, excitement and rejoicing as if we were in the presence of the exalted Buddha encircled by arhants. At once I requested four upasakas to unpack the articles loaded on the backs of two elephants. Among us to pay honor to the guru were panditas well versed in the five sciences and bhikshus expert in the Tripitaka. All these bhikshus wore slippers and were clad in three robes excellently dyed with (the juice of) crocus of Kashmir, that being the admirable costume of the Mahasangika school of Buddhism. Auspiciously, each carried a standard iron bowl in good condition, a cylindrical copper pot fashioned in Magadha and used as a measuring jug with a capacity of one drona, and a metal wand, all as decreed by the exalted Buddha, as well as other beautifully fashioned ritual objects. All the panditas humbly wore their panditas' caps and wielded white fans. Of great panditas, there were Sukhagati, Dharmamitra, Kasalasambhava, Shuravajra, Devamati, Ravigupta, Bhumisara, Jannasara, Veghaindra, Danashrimitra, Prajabhadra, Suchandra, Samantabhadra, Guptasara, Anantamati, Samadravici, Rajsemeru and Shuralalita, among others; Bhikshu Jannabhadra and other experts on the Tripitaka, one hundred and sixty-eight bhikshus, thirteen shamaneras and four other great bhikshus totalling one hundred and eighty-five in all, followed after me. So spaced that they were neither too close to nor too far from one another, they walked in line like a colourful rainbow to the place where Guru Suvarnavipa dwelt.

Devas, on seeing this display of the three perfections, namely, grace, glory and wealth, showered down a rain of flowers. Although I had had a spiritual relationship with that guru since time immemorial, yet, being there to receive Dharma exhortations which I had not heard before, and for the sake of the panditas who followed after me, I prostrated myself at his feet. Then the followers of the guru perceived that all my disciples were at one in observing the practices and holding right views, since they had all been taught by me. The disciples of guru Suvarnavipa, observing all these things, were overcome by the glory of my great followers and in turn prostrated themselves to us.

From the time of my studying there, I was honoured by all both in Tibet and in India. At the time of my visit, I possessed a jewelled vase, its lower half a great bulb flattened at the bottom, its neck long and so shaped that water came out in a straight line from the spout. This jewelled vase, which was completely transparent so that all its contents could be seen from outside, I now filled with precious objects—gold, silver, pearls, coral and malachite—and offered it to the guru. My followers, too, offered a gold coin to each of the disciples of guru Suvarnavipa.

Then the noble guru Suvarnavipa spoke in verse about the difficulties experienced on my way, saying:

"Do you faithfully practise vinaya, reverend sir?
Do you hold to shila, reverend sir?
Do you cling to the practice of mahakaruna, reverend sir?
Have you come here as a king of religion?
I have heard of your fame from far away
And, on meeting you today, how can we not rejoice at your coming, reverend sir?
In performing your extensive works in the holy land of India for the sake of all beings,
Did you protect them all by your great compassion without partiality, reverend sir?
Have you striven well (for religion) since becoming a pandita, reverend sir?
Did many gurus not protect you, reverend sir?
Did many panditas not take responsibilities to bestow the Dharma on you, reverend sir?
Today it is fortunate that you have arrived at this place. O lord of beings, I have heard that for thirteen months you sailed across the ocean.
How truly marvellous that you overcame such baffling difficulties!
I have heard that you subdued the Maheshvara.
How wonderfully you have made your name resound!
It is amazing that you overcame your fears
pandita, having travelled from so far away,
Are you not exhausted both in mind and body?
Were no obstacles created by the evil powers?
And did you not feel dismayed, sir?
How auspicious is this day of the great pandita's arrival!
Some of my disciples are meditating in scattered places,
But the rest of us have come here to receive you.
How fortunate we are to meet you here!
Let us proceed now to the monastery,
Where many are gathered in the grove.
The circumstances of your journey we shall discuss later.
Come, let us now converse on spiritual matters."

To this I replied:

"Yes, reverend one,
I have come from the central part of India.
And, in accordance with the Dharma, I have tackled obstacles,
Thanks to the unceasing power conferred by the Triple Gem.
The black Maheshvara was defeated owing to his accumulation of evil karma.
We have preserved our three endowments of body, speech and mind from the powers of evil and arrived well and unfatigued.
Do you dwell here in good health, unwearied by your efforts for the benefit of beings, sir?
Do you dwell serenely here, discoursing on the inimitable Dharma, sir?
Do you dwell here with an ever-widening ocean of wisdom as you subdue the hordes of mara, sir?
I have heard that you, O guru, are a master of religion dwelling here in Suvarnavipa and preaching to all beings day and night with the deepest loving-kindness and compassion.
Therefore, I pray you, O omniscient one, be my guru.
With your knowledge infinite as the sky,

I pray you to increase my wisdom." Thus I besought him.

"How fortunate that the noble man has come!
We, too, shall take pleasure in hearing the Dharma with you," cried the monks with one voice.

Then our whole company proceeded to the grove, where I paid respect to an aged mahathera bhikshu who was preaching Dharma to some disciples there. At that time he made no return to my gesture of respect. Afterwards, when I was seated in the chamber of the guru in the Golden Umbrella Palace, that mahathera, having finished preaching, approached and, paying me respect, spoke thus:

"Fortunate are we that the noble man has come here! My failure to welcome you just now was not due to pride; it was because I remembered that the best way to please a noble one is to continue one's religious works."

On hearing these words, I replied with joy: "It is admirable that you have so well understood both the Dharma and (the nature of the) person (you addressed)." Then, when we were well settled in our quarters, the guru preached to us, an abhisamayalankara course of fifteen sessions, giving us a lucid exposition on the law of dependent origination.

After that, I spent day and night in listening, pondering, and contemplating in the Palace of the Silvery Umbrella.

Thus ends the story of how Atisha went to Suvarnavipa and met the guru.

Atisha and the Restoration of Buddhism in Tibet

Compiled by the Tibetan Teachers' Training College
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Lha Lama Yeshe Yod, (King) of Manjushri, (the western province of Tibet), whose holy endeavors were unending, sent many learned disciples off to India. After they had studied Sanskrit, they were asked to translate a great many volumes of sutras and tantras. Among their translators Renchen Sangpo became the most preeminent. Lha Lama also sponsored the erection of the Todingpel Monastery.

Previously Buddhism had been suppressed by King Langdarma, so very few ordained monks were to be found in Tibet during the seventy years that followed his reign. However, at that time, thanks to the services rendered by the religious King of Mnahri, monasteries for bhikshus were built. Nevertheless there was conflict, because those who preferred the Vinaya school opposed the followers of the Tantric school and vice versa. Thus whereas almost all subscribed to this or that doctrine in name, it was rare to find anyone who understood even one set of teachings, let alone the entire practices and doctrines of the Mahayana. It was a time when numbers of Indians came to obtain gold from Tibet, and these people, pretending to great knowledge of tantra, behaved truculently, employed black arts, and cheated many Tibetans.

King Lha Lama was saddened on seeing those conditions. Therefore he sent Gyatsundru Singhe and others to India in the hope that they would be able to translate the scriptures, and, in particular, invite a well-versed pandit who would be of real benefit to the religion. Having given these commands, he sent a large amount of gold with them. The disciples, after a long period of investigation, found no one who could surpass Atisha, but as they were not able to bring back the pandita, they returned to Tibet and related the reasons to the King of Mnahri.

Again Lha Lama, desiring to invite the pandita in order to introduce unsullied doctrine, collected a large amount of gold, and set forth in search of more. The King of Garlog, knowing that Lha Lama was seeking gold so as to invite the pandita, issued this command:

"The ancestors of this man did much for the spread of Buddhism in former times. Therefore, unless he is made prisoner he will invite the pandita and spread Buddhism again. So capture him and imprison him."

Accordingly, Lha Lama was captured and put in prison. Hearing this news, Jangchub Yod [A nephew of Lha Lama] went with a hundred horsemen to release his uncle but the Garlog King was able to put up a powerful resistance; Jangchub Yod thought that since it would cost many lives, it would be unwise to wage war against him. Moreover, if there were likely to be some danger to Atisha's life, it would not be possible to invite him. Therefore, thinking to release his uncle by peaceful means, that is, by paying ransom, he approached the King of Garlog, but the King exclaimed:

"Either you give up your intention to invite the pandita and pay homage to me, or else you must bring me gold equivalent in weight to the body of Lha Lama."

Then Jangchub Yod brought him a hundred gold coins as ransom, but the King refused to accept them. The next time, he took with him gold equivalent in weight to the body of Lha Lama, but again it was refused.

Then Jangchub Yod went up to the gate of Lha Lama's prison and cried:

"O, compassionate one, it would be futile to wage war against the Garlog King, since the karma from previous lives has fallen upon us. It is better for you to die here for the sake of religion than to live under such an evil man. With that thought in mind, I went to him with gold equivalent in weight to your body, but still he refused. I will come back to release you when I have collected gold equivalent in weight to your head also. Until then, keep your mind fixed on karma, pray to the Triple Gem, and make merit by meditating on compassion."

On hearing this, his uncle smiled and said:

"When you were a dear little boy being fed with butter cakes, I never thought you would be able to face such hardships. Your doing so reveals that you will preserve the tradition of our ancestors, even though I pass away. This is what you should understand. Already I am doing as you have said. Even if I was not to die at this time, I would have but ten years left. Therefore it would be better to die now for the religion. Do not give even one coin to the Garlog King. Take all the gold to India to invite Atisha and deliver this message to the pandita, 'For you and the sake of our religion, I have sacrificed my life to the Garlog King. My great longing is to spread Buddhism in Tibet. Therefore, please fulfill this desire and I shall pray for blessings to fall upon you in future lives.' This is the message you must deliver to the pandits. Now leave me here and devote yourself to the religion."

Then Jangchub Yod, in accordance with astrological observations and predictions, said to Nagtso Lotsawa (the translator):

"You must go to India to invite Atisha and I will send with you a large amount of gold and as many servants as are needed. I wish you to tell Atisha how Langdarma suppressed our religion, although the Buddha Dharma had been spread and propagated by religious kings in former times. (Tell him how) later my ancestors were able to re-establish the Buddha Dharma, but still those who know how to practise it properly are rare and the Buddha Dharma has been sullied by misconduct. (Recount how) my uncle, not being able to bear these conditions, went to seek gold to invite him, but was murdered by the Garlog King. All these things you must tell to Atisha. Alas! My uncle was so very gracious, why should he have met such trouble? I dare not leave him behind and come with you. When I peeped at him through a chink in the door, he was bound with ropes, his voice was weak and his body thin as a bee's, yet still he thought of nothing but Atisha, Tibetans and their need for Buddhism. (Say to him) 'If such is the courage of us remote Tibetans, how can you, the merciful one, the refuge (of the helpless), abandon us?'"

Giving these messages he sent the Lotsawa Nagtso with his servants to India.

Many hindrances that beset Nagtso on his way to India were overcome by various miracles performed by Avalokiteshvara, and thus they arrived at Vikramala-shila. Here, they consulted with Gyatsundru Singhe [a Tibetan living in India] about inviting Atisha, but sometimes they had difficulty even in seeing Atisha face to face. Then one day Gyatsundru Singhe took Nagtso secretly to Atisha's chamber. Here they placed a piece of unwrought gold on a mandala fifteen inches high and also presented other gold pieces to the Lord, placing them on the top of the circle of offering. After that Gyatsundru Singhe related what had transpired earlier in Tibet, and then repeated the invitation, saying:

"Again a reverend one has come to invite you. Please, out of sympathy for us Tibetans, do not refuse us as you did in that previous year."

Whereupon Atisha answered:

"No doubt the rulers of Tibet, the three religious kings and the great lamas, were incarnations of the bodhisattvas. Otherwise they could not have revived Buddhism after its destruction. It is unfitting for me to disregard the order of the bodhisattvas and also I feel ashamed that those people have lost much wealth and many men for my sake. O! I feel pity for Tibetans. However, I am advanced in age, holding many keys (having many administrative duties) and with many tasks that remain undone. Nevertheless, I will consult the omens; in the meanwhile take back your gold."

That same day, Atisha prayed to Avalokiteshvara and Tara, inquiring how far the religion and sentient beings would be benefited, how far the wish of the king could be fulfilled, and whether there would be any danger to his own life. Having prayed on these three matters, that very night he dreamt he heard the words:

"Go to where you will find a small Buddhist temple and inquire of the yogini who comes there."

Having thus dreamt, in the morning he took a handful of flowers and proceeded to a temple where he met a yogini, hair flowing to the ground. To his inquiry, she replied,

"There will be benefit if you set forth for Tibet, especially with the help of an upasaka."

Still desiring to pray at Buddha Gaya and make great offerings there, he approached the Abott Jnana Shri Metri, by whom he was given a handful of cowries to deliver to an old whitehaired woman who was living at Buddha Gaya. When Atisha reached that city the old woman demanded:

"Give me the cowries that were sent to me."

Atisha, having paid homage mentally and questioned her in his mind, got the same answers as he had received before (from the yogini). But when he inquired about physical danger, she replied that if Atisha did not set forth for Tibet, he would live to the age of ninety-two years, whereas if he did set forth, he would live to be only seventy-three. At this Atisha courageously decided that he would not care about his health if his journey would benefit Tibet.

Thereupon, many groups of monks and sponsors tried to dissuade him from setting out for Tibet, declaring that, if he did so, India, as the source of religions, would greatly deteriorate. Seeing how things stood, Atisha resorted to very skilful means; not mentioning his journey to Tibet, he went back and forth many times, giving out that he was making huge merits at holy places such as Buddha Gaya. Presently a phantom of Drom (one of his future disciples) came in the form of a merchant and without anyone knowing, he carried away his images of Manjushrivajra and the buddhas, his set of holy writings, and other sacred objects. Thus Atisha was able to proceed to Nepal. There at the request of its king, Yashananda, and many devotees, he stayed for one year, constructed the Tanbhehari Monastery, and established a sangha.

Then Atisha and his disciples reached Nepali Tsong (on the frontier of Tibet) where he met 300 horsemen who had been sent by Jangchub Yod to welcome him. They were clad and adorned all in white and the four great ministers, Lhayi Wangchuck, Lhayi Lodo, Lhayi Sherup and Lhayi Sizin, were encircled by sixteen horsemen who held lances with white flags, whereas the rest of the retinue held small Buddhist flags and twenty umbrellas. All of them, masters and servants,

were playing upon flutes and stringed instruments, reciting the Refuge in the Triple Gem and praying:

"May the doctrine of the Buddha prosper in Tibet!"

While uttering these auspicious words, they remained mounted and formed a circle. In the centre were placed Atisha and his retinue, with the rest of the horsemen facing them, led by the four great ministers. As in former times when the wise ministers of Chogyal Thrison Dhesten had gone with songs on their lips to receive the Abbot Bodhisatta, so did the ministers come forward singing. This occasion is famous for the thousand melodious and auspicious songs with which they invited Atisha. Nagtso Lotsawa and thirty-five bhikshus encircled him. In their midst stood Atisha, his whole body beautiful to see, pleasing to gaze upon, worthy of worship by humans and gods. Sitting astride his horse, Chanshe Tonmon, he uttered the following words in Sanskrit with smiling countenance: "Ema Ho Ati Anti Pala Ho." Uttering many Sanskrit benedictions, he continued on his journey.

While circumambulating Gang Rinpoche [A fabulous mountain region, the chief peak of which is said to be 15,990 feet] he heard the sound of a ghanti (a white sandalwood gong), for the Sthaviras [Elders who severally preached Buddhist doctrine in the various islands and continents of the Buddhist cosmogony] and Yen Lekjun were observing upasojong day [the day of removing faults by making confession to a monk]. Atisha, on coming face to face with the chief Sthavira, held consultation with him. On the bank of Manasarova Lake, while he was making holy water offerings [to quench the thirst of pretas], Avalokiteshvara appeared, nagas [serpent-gods who live under the ground] came to worship him and many wondrous events occurred. Then when they were gradually approaching Gughe Tedhen, Nagtso delivered a letter to Lha Lama Jangchub Yod which made the great king cry joyfully:

"Long indeed have I been praying for his coming, daily with reverence and faith. Now I shall meet with that Lord! In my dream yesterday there appeared a great sun from the west and a full moon from the east. At their approach, cloud, mist and dust vanished immediately. Also I dreamt that groups of stars gathered in lines as though it were midnight and bowed to sun and moon. Perhaps that moon might be myself but I knew not who was that sun coming from the west. However that may be, it was an auspicious dream."

Then Atisha stood in the centre of his retinue, surrounded by five hundred horsemen, wearing a beautiful cap bright as the sun. Whereas his thirty-four disciples and servants resembled one another in bearing, conduct and costume, his own robe was smooth, shining, of fine texture and sweet-smelling. Brilliant was his splendor, upright his handsome figure and many were his other marks of distinction. The whole gathering, as soon as they beheld that noble man, were unable to take their eyes from him and prayed spontaneously:

"We seek your protection." Furthermore they implored: "Pray look compassionately upon us Tibetan people who have accumulated so many evil deeds! Our Lha Lamas who have faced such difficulties for your sake will be overjoyed and by no means grudge the loss of Tibetan men and treasure. Though it was difficult indeed to persuade you, it was truly worth our trouble. Now a good time has come."

These words were shouted by all the people with full faith. Atisha also rejoiced extremely. Looking upon the Tibetan people, he blessed them.

Anilha Chick Chobum, Lha Lama's aunt, on meeting Atisha, folded her hands and exclaimed:

"For you, pandita, I lost my nephew who was as precious to me as a golden mountain, but now I feel no sorrow or remorse, for I have given my nephew's life in exchange for your coming, pandita. Truly the exchange has been worthwhile. Now, I have you, pandita, to show to Hasu in Nepal and Rinchen Songpo in Mnahri (western Tibet) who set themselves up to be pre-eminent pandits."

With these words she laid down the mountain-like burden of sorrow caused by Lha Lama's death. She then offered her turquoise necklace and fifty gold coins to Atisha.

Then Atisha paid a visit to the Todin Golden Monastery and was received by Jangchub Yod with a great procession. Lochen Rinchen Sangpo also invited him to his own monastery. Here, when he had listened to Atisha expound the madhyamika philosophy, and particularly the Sambara abhisheka, as well as other sacred matters and Dharma teachings, holy thoughts sprang up in the Abbot's mind as well as wide comprehension of the teaching; therefore he offered everything he had to Atisha. On being asked by Atisha to accompany him as his interpreter, the Abbot pointed to his head and begged Atisha to allow him to engage in religious practice as he had grown old and grey. Atisha in response to his plea, exhorted him.

"O Rinchen Sangpo! Since you righteously wish to practise religion, let not your mind wander into evil."

Rinchen Sangpo, keeping these teachings in mind, sealed his meditation house with iron nails, writing on the lintel of the door:

"If any mundane thoughts occur in this place, may the protectors of the Dharma cut off my head!"

Having done so, he sat in contemplation for ten years and the mandala of Sambara manifested itself before him.

One day Jangchub Yod, shedding tears, related fully to Atisha how, although Buddhism had been introduced by his paternal ancestors, yet it had since been reduced to ashes and scattered.

"Now it lies with you, O gracious Atisha, to bestow on the rude and rough Tibetan converts the profound teachings of the Dharma. O compassionate one! I pray you compose a treatise setting forth the essential points of the Buddha's doctrine in a manner very easy to practise for the benefit of the whole Tibetan people."

Atisha responded gladly by writing the *Bodhipathaprabha* treatise (his famous *Light on the Path of Liberation*).

Atisha then thought to move on to Tibet's central region, but was restrained by a promise which, at the time of his setting out from India, had been made to the Abbot of Vikramshila Vihara. Should Nagtso Lotsawa not send Atisha back to India after three years in Tibet, that promise would be broken. Accordingly, Nagtso Lotsawa, in fulfilment of his bond, induced Atisha to return to India for that reason. Atisha, at his request, went back as far as Puran, at which place he occasionally received a prophecy from Tara that, with the assistance of an upasaka, he would bring much benefit to Buddhism. Moreover, Tara prophesied that the upasaka would soon come. Atisha kept constant watch for his coming and it was said he used to exclaim:

"My upasaka has still not come. Would Tara tell a lie?"

Then one day Dromtonpa, having been invited by a sponsor, arrived at the dwelling while Atisha was out. Though Dromtonpa was informed that Atisha would soon be back, he left, saying:

"I would sooner meet my guru earlier than later and I have no time to wait."

With these words, he went out and presently met Atisha in a lane. Atisha handed him the tsampa and butter he had begged from his sponsor as a share for his upasaka that day. Dromtonpa ate the tsampa, but he used the butter to offer a lamp which would last throughout the night in front of Atisha's bed. Thereafter, he offered a butter lamp in front of Atisha's bed for the rest of his life. Dromtonpa was blessed by Atisha as his chief disciple at the very moment of their meeting.

Then setting out from Puran, Atisha gradually journeyed to Keydron. At that time, due to inspiration on the part of Atisha and to good fortune on the part of the local Tibetans, the way was blocked by a skirmish near the border of Nepal, and Atisha stayed one year preaching the Dharma to several converts at the shrine of Ranjun Pakpa Lhakhan. Today there still exists in that place the monastery of Keydron Samten Ling.

Dromtonpa Rinpoche eloquently persuaded Atisha to pay a visit to central Tibet, saying there were many Buddha images, holy writings, stupas, and thousands upon thousands of Buddhist monks. When Atisha agreed to grant Dromtonpa's prayer, Drom Rinpoche wrote specially to inform Kawa Sakya Wangchuk, although at that time there were also (other great lamas such as) Nog Lekpi Sherap and Khuton Tsondru Yuntran and so on. In his letter, he wrote: "The great lamas of Tibet must reach here before autumn to welcome Atisha." On receiving the letter, Kawa Sakya informed all the great lamas of Tibet, but before all were ready to set forth together, Khuton left in advance, saying:

"It is not necessary to include me in your party."

Though he created some anxiety, the rest set forth immediately to invite Atisha. In the meantime, Atisha preached the Dharma widely. The places where he preached are now known as Grachokhor and Ladhap Chokhor. At that time Nagtso could not invite Atisha back to India immediately and, recollecting the promise he had made to the Abbot of Vikramashila, the translator became worried. Seeing this, Atisha consoled him, saying:

"O Lotsawa, you should not be so distressed. There is no offense if things are beyond our power to remedy."

On hearing the pandita's words, the translator rejoiced and further prayed Atisha to visit central Tibet if there was no offense involved. Then the great lamas of central Tibet arrived to welcome Atisha. These great lamas wore elegant *san* (shawls of Tibetan monks) and were dressed in *setab* (ceremonial garments which abbots or monks usually wear on festive occasions as a mark of rank). They rode good horses covered with woolen blankets. Atisha, on seeing them coming, cried:

"O upasaka, what are these? Look at all those spirits approaching!"

So saying, he hid his head, wrapping it tightly in his robe. So Dromtonpa told the newcomers that it was proper for the great lamas of Tibet to come dressed in bhikshus' robes. When they drew nigh, on Dromtonpa's advice, Atisha rose and returned their prostrations. In due course, when Atisha was on the way to Tsang, at Palpud Tan he met Lhodrak Marpa Lotsawa who was

about to leave for his last journey to India. Marpa studied the Dharma with Atisha but, on being asked by the pandita to accompany him as his interpreter, replied:

"It is absolutely necessary for me to go to India this time; however, I can meet you afterwards."

Then gradually they approached Sakya, and Atisha, pointing in that direction, prophesied that an incarnation of Manjushri would appear there. At this place Drokme Lotsawa bowed himself to the feet of Atisha as a disciple and venerated and served him meritoriously. Then when Atisha was proceeding towards Nartan, he foretold that at this place an incarnation of Arya Sthivira would occur in the near future. Thereafter he visited the shrine of Shalun Tel where he stayed in a rocky cave and preached many sermons. On leaving this place, he passed Buddhist Lent in Myantod, where he encountered three disciples, namely Yolchos, Yoldranron and Yoltag Bab. Disciple Golo also came and bowed at the feet of Atisha. Gonpapa, coming to the same place, did likewise and presented offerings. After Buddhist Lent, Atisha went to the central region by way of Ron. When he reached Gonpa Jangtang (a grassy undulating plain in the north of Tibet) he pointed towards the mountain of Lhasa and, on inquiring what was to be found there, was told that it contained the Temple of Lhasa (an appellation of the Jo Khan; the chief temple there). Then he observed:

"In the direction of this temple there are three rainbows and many deva children are paying their respects."

When Atisha came to Samye, he was served by Devaguru Bodhiraj and there was a great congregation of Tibetans to whom Atisha preached many sermons. In Samye, while he was in the temple or circumambulating it, he performed numerous miracles which inspired many people to attain single-hearted faith. Then he was invited by Khuton to Yarlun where he stayed in the Rarted quarter and preached often. However, as Khuton did not conduct himself well, Dromtonpa and others fled with their master, embarking in a boat belonging to Myanpo. Khuton, seeing this, ran after them and cried:

"Atisha, I beg you to stay."

But the master kept silent and threw his cap to him as a keepsake that would bring blessings. Thereafter Atisha stayed in the shrine of Won at Keru for one month and drew a picture of himself on the wall there. Then he returned to Samye and stayed in the Pakar Ling. There, on seeing many holy writings from India, he felt boundless joy and cried:

"Oh, the spread of Buddhism in Tibet in former times was even greater than in India! Seeing these holy writings, it is just as if I were at Maha Bodhi!"

So saying, Atisha rejoiced in the monastery and holy places there.

Then nearly two hundred horsemen came from Banton to receive him, and he and his attendants went to Godhar and stayed in Gyapep for one month. Later, when Atisha was proceeding to the Jo Khan at the invitation of Nog Lekpi Sherap, Avalokiteshvara appeared in the form of a tall layman and declared:

"Excellent! the Maha Pandita has come and I pray he may win victory!"

Uttering these words, he hurried away. Although Atisha dismounted and ran after him, he could not come up with him. On being asked what he was doing, he replied:

"Have you not seen a tall layman?"

"Yes, we did," they answered, so Atisha said:

"Well, that was my tutelary deity Mahakaruna [Great Compassion, another name for the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara] and, desiring to do him obeisance, I ran after him but could not catch up with him. Oh, there is nothing more wonderful than this Mahakaruna of the Jo Khan shrine of Lhasa! He is the real Mahakaruna."

Again on seeing the image of Shakyamuni, he declared it to be a real embodiment of Shakyamuni. He thereupon ordered a skilful sculptor from India to construct a similar image. Presently he wondered whether there existed a history of that monastery and of its dedication by King Tsonten Gampo, whereupon a mad beggarwoman cried that she would display its history to him. Recognizing her as a disguised yogini, Atisha paid her homage in his mind and asked her to show it to him by all means.

"Well, it is written on the Bumpa pillar at a height of two and a half fathoms, but it would be wise not to disclose this to others,"

replied the yogini. Atisha found it just as she had said and a guardian of the temple treasures who was standing near by told them they could copy as much as they could write on that day. Dromtonpa and four disciples spent the day copying it, but there still remained a little that could not be finished that day.

During Atisha's stay in Lhasa for one winter season, many amazing signs occurred. He spent the summer that year in Yerpa at the invitation of Nog Jangchub Jungne and performed many deeds for the benefit of sentient beings. Thereafter he was invited to Penpo by Kawa Sakya Wangchuk and stayed in Menpa Jilpur, where he preached many sermons. Next he returned to Yerpa, where he received an invitation from Bhaton and, travelling back through Lhasa, came to Nartan. During all these days, Drom Rinpoche investigated the essential stages of the liberation path day and night continually.

After settling at the Lhari Ningpo Cul Monastery in Yerpa, the guru and his disciples spent three years discussing and examining the very essence of the stages of the liberation path and then they made a summary of this teaching. In that same place, Atisha gave instruction in the seven Kadam Lhacho (seven wholesome teachings of Kadam) as well as sermons and initiations pertaining to the sixteen tige. Sanpu Noglekpi Sherap offered a mandala to both Atisha and Dromtonpa, praying them to compose a book to reveal the secret mysteries of both the guru and his disciple. In response, Atisha wrote the *Noble Biography of Dromtonpa*, whereas Dromtonpa wrote on the extremely secret occult teachings of Atisha in a book called *A Book of Phantoms* which in these days is known as the *Kadam Lek Bum*. For many years this was transmitted privately (from lama to pupil) and was not allowed to be preached in public. Later, an emanation of Dromtonpa Rinpoche known as Drom Ku Mara clarified the secret of this Dharma and spread it. Then in due course, this doctrine was made public at the monastery of Nartan. Since then it has spread in all directions.