

The Four Dharmas of Gampopa

Healing the Heart and Mind



As Taught by
Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche

Ratnashri

THE FOUR DHARMAS OF GAMPOPA

AS TAUGHT BY KHENCHEN
KONCHOG GYALTSHEN RINPOCHE

Healing the Heart and Mind

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Foreword by H.H. Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang

། །འཇིགས་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་མཚོ་བོ།།



DRIKUNG KYABGON

Foreword

It is a great pleasure to learn that the precious Four Dharmas of Gampopa taught by Venerable Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche based on the three commentaries of Lord Jigten Sumgön and Gampopa's Jewel Ornament of Liberation is now compiled into a book.

The main purpose is to purify our mental delusions so that we all can experience the absolute and undefiled peace and happiness. Lord Jigten Sumgön said, "The Four-Dharmas is the complete and unmistakable path that leads to ultimate enlightenment."

I trust that through this practice The Four Dharmas of Gampopa and grow the seed of the Buddha Nature within us. May the fruits of loving-kindness, compassion and wisdom be fully blossomed into the hearts of every sentient being.

With many prayers

Konchok Tenzin Kunzang Thinley Lhundup
The one blessed with the name of 'Gyalwa Drikungpa'

Foreword by His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche



༤ ལག་རྒྱུ་ལེན་པའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་

His Eminence D. K. Garchen Rinpoche

༄༅། །དགེ་བའི་བཤེས་གཉེན་ཚེན་པོ་མཁན་ཚེན་དགོན་མཚོག་རྒྱལ་མཚན་རིན་པོ་ཚེ་མཚོག་ནས། ལྷུ་བ་
ཚེན་མི་ལ་རས་པའི་ཐུགས་རྒྱས་དུགས་པོ་བསོད་ནམ་འུག་ཚེན་ནས། དུགས་པོ་ལྷ་འོད་གཞིན་རྒྱུའི་མཛད་
པའི་ ཡོངས་བྲགས་སུ་དུགས་པོའི་ཚོས་བཞི་ཞེས་པ། ཚོག་ཚོགས་ཉུང་ལ་དོན་ཟབ་ཅིང་རྒྱ་ཚེ་བའི་གདམ་
དག་བདུད་ཅིའི་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ལྷ་བུ་དེ་ཉིད་ལ་འགྲེལ་བཤད་གནང་བའི་དཔེ་དེབ་འདི་ཉིད་དཔར་རྒྱན་གནང་
བར་རྗེས་སུ་ཡི་རང་ལྷ། དུགས་པོ་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་པའི་ངེས་པ་དོན་ཀྱི་དགེ་བའི་བཤེས་གཉེན་མཁན་ཚེན་
ཁོང་ལྷ་བུའི་མཛད་པའི་དེབ་འདི་ལ་རྟེན་ནས་དོན་གཉེར་ཅན་མང་པོར་མན་ཐོག་རྒྱ་ཚེན་འབྲུང་ངེས་པ་
གདོན་མི་ཟེལ། དེ་དེ་བཞིན་ཡོང་བའི་རེ་ལྷོན་བཅས། ཅ ། རྟེན་པོ། ལྷ། ལ། ལ། ལ།

མགར་ཚེན་མིང་འཛིན་པ་དགོན་མཚོག་རྒྱལ་མཚན་ནས། ལྷོ་ལོ། ༢༠༢༢། ཟླ། ༠༦། ཚེས། ༠༦། ལ།

In few words, the sayings widely known as the “Four Dharmas of Gampopa,” composed by the heart disciple of the Mahasiddha Milarepa, Dagpo Sonam Rinchen or the youth Dagpo Chandrababha, carry profound and vast meaning and originate vast oral instructions like an ocean of nectar.

The great spiritual master, the excellent Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche, now created a commentarial explanation on these sayings, and I offer my rejoicing that this book could be published.

I have no doubt and am certain that based on this book on Gampopa’s definitive meaning composed by the spiritual master Khenchen, vast benefit will arise for many interested readers seeking meaning.

With aspirations for this to happen,

Konchog Gyaltsen, who holds the name of “Garchen”
on June 6 in the year 2022.

[translated by Mark Riege]

Preface

Dharma Lord Gampopa, the founder of the Dagpo Kagyu tradition, was Milarepa's heart disciple. Before meeting Milarepa, he was a physician and had studied thoroughly various lineages within Atisha's Kadampa tradition—the practical lineage, philosophical lineage, and mind training lineage—with many teachers, and became an expert and a great teacher. Then he went for a solitary retreat in a cave and heard of Milarepa by chance. As soon as he heard of Milarepa, he got such great inspiration and overwhelming devotion that he felt strongly that he must see Milarepa. At that time, Gampopa was in central Tibet and Milarepa was in western Tibet. Driven by his intense yearning, he made a journey on foot by himself for a month. He finally met Milarepa and offered all his body, speech, and mind. At Gampopa's request, Milarepa gave all the great teachings that he had received from Marpa to Gampopa. Milarepa studied and practiced from Marpa and achieved buddhahood in a single lifetime. Milarepa saw thoroughly the nature of Gampopa and transmitted complete teachings of the Vajrayana system, including the Fivefold Path of Mahamudra and the Six Yogas of Naropa, that complemented the sutra philosophical system that Gampopa had studied from the Kadampa tradition. Gampopa attended Milarepa while staying with him.

After giving all the teachings, Milarepa told Gampopa that it was not enough to just receive the teachings and that he must practice and stay in a cave by himself. Through Milarepa's support, Gampopa meditated diligently and got the vision of the nirmanakaya, the sambhogakaya, and finally the dharmakaya from within his mind. Gampopa totally revealed the nature of his own mind which is not different from the mind of all the buddhas. He attained complete buddhahood after six years of meditation.

Then according to Milarepa's prophesy, Gampopa went to Daglha Gampo where he started teaching and established monasteries. Daglha Gampo was in the Dagpo region. His lineage is called Dagpo Kagyu. Because of his great realization and enlightenment, he gathered hundreds of thousands of great students from all parts of Tibet. Some were great disciples like Dusum Khyenpa (the first Karmapa), Phagmodrupa, and so forth. Because of Gampopa's great skill, wisdom, and enlightened qualities, Dagpo Kagyu was very well-known and became one of the most powerful lineages in the whole of Tibet. It stayed that way for centuries; still nowadays the Kagyu lineage is strong with many great teachers.

The Four Dharmas of Gampopa are the quintessence that brings together the very profound and vast meaning of the Buddha's entire teachings in just four lines:

Dharma becomes the Dharma.

Dharma becomes the path.

The path dispels confusion.

Confusion dawns as wisdom.

Sometimes we put it as a supplication or a prayer:

Grant your magnificent blessings so that my mind and the minds of all sentient beings may follow the Dharma.

Grant your magnificent blessings so that Dharma may follow along the path.

Grant your magnificent blessings so that confusion may be dispelled from the path.

Grant your magnificent blessings so that confusion may dawn as wisdom.

First of all, why do we need to study and practice the Dharma? The Buddha, the fully awakened one, taught the Dharma not as a religion to believe in something; rather, it is his wisdom that he shared—a method to reveal the nature of reality or the mode of abiding of all phenomena in samsara and nirvana, which is universal. In the six realms of samsara, everywhere in the world, all sentient beings—humans and non-humans, believers and non-believers—innately desire to be free from suffering physically and mentally and desire to have peace and happiness. This has nothing to do with culture or belief system, rather this is the nature of reality. However, suffering that we do not want does not simply go away by itself or because we wish it so, as well as happiness does not come by itself or simply because we wish for it. Because of this, we all keep busy doing something physically or mentally, religiously or atheistically, to free ourselves from suffering and to acquire peace and happiness. This is reality. Sometimes people even get into war, killing people, thinking that in doing so, they can be free from suffering or they can preserve peace and happiness; but that does not solve the problem. Trying to create happiness through negative actions only destroys our happiness because the inexorable karma cause and its result cannot be overcome by anyone, not even the Buddha. They have to bear the result of their actions.

Some religious believers pray to gods, deities, or entities to free themselves from suffering or to attain peace and happiness. Religious

believers think that non-believers are foolish, while non-believers think that religious believers are stupid, not practical. In society, there are so many fields of knowledge—science, economics, technology, and so on—all these are designed to help people to be free from suffering and to bring peace and happiness. So far until now, we have not yet found a way to totally free ourselves from suffering and have total peace and happiness. We expect that problems come from outside and the solution also comes from outside. We expect that there is something outside that can bring us eternal peace and happiness without looking inside our mind and relating to that. Without really looking into what brings suffering and what brings happiness, even if one has a luxurious living with an abundance of material possessions and physical pleasures, one still suffers mentally because of mental afflictions. There is nobody and nothing from outside that can make us suffer as much as these afflictions within us, and we are so habituated to that. The Buddha’s teaching is the teaching of the mind. It teaches us how to purify all obscurations in order to reveal the nature of mind or the nature of reality. He shared his wisdom with everybody some 2600 years ago.

To relate to the Four Dharmas of Gampopa, the first Dharma is “Dharma becomes the Dharma.” First, look at the Four Noble Truths that the Buddha taught. The Buddha said that we should know and deeply understand the complexity of suffering. Then, we should understand and avoid the cause or the origin of suffering. When we give up the cause of suffering, we achieve the cessation of suffering. Nirvana can be achieved through the path, that is, the Eightfold Path—right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The Four Noble Truths is the framework of the Buddha’s teaching.

In samsara, we do not have much insight into what suffering is really about. Because of the lack of understanding of suffering, even though we do not want suffering, we are mistakenly attached to the causes of suffering. Thus, we cannot be free from suffering. There are three kinds of suffering. First, suffering of suffering includes obvious physical and mental suffering. Second, suffering of change occurs when adventitious good and desirable conditions cannot be sustained due to impermanence; thus, happiness turns into suffering when we are attached to temporary happiness. The third is pervasive suffering of conditioning, which is very profound and we need special wisdom to penetrate into that. As long as we have ignorance and mental confusion, mental afflictions and karma are created, which become the cause or the condition of suffering, and suffering is bound to come. You see, mind is powerful and it is not just

a piece of flesh, but it is consciousness which has no form or color. Like space, the mind cannot be found anywhere, even by powerful machines, though it is there. It is so profound and vast. Since it is not a matter, not something that physically exists, it is so ambiguous, unclear, yet so powerful. For example, when there is a negative thought of anger or strong desire, it takes away all your attention. You are totally controlled by that negative thought; thus, you have no freedom. When there is great compassion and loving-kindness, that mind is so powerful; one is totally absorbed in benefitting others, and bringing real peace and happiness to others. Mind keeps changing all the time—sometimes you feel good and uplifted while at some other times you feel bad and in total darkness. That is how mind is complex, vast, and profound. So that is why the Buddha taught about it thoroughly. Until we fully understand these mental states, their nature, and how we developed them—we are under the condition of suffering. This is the pervasive suffering of conditioning. Therefore, we need to have special wisdom to both understand suffering thoroughly and know how to get rid of it.

The Buddha taught the origin of suffering so that we can avoid creating the cause. The origin of suffering is confusion which means that there is a disparity between our perception and the nature of reality. For example, in reality, everything is impermanent and keeps changing, but we perceive that things are permanent, real, and tangible. In reality, every sentient being, whoever that is, is under the power of suffering, but we do not realize that. Those who are homeless, living on the street are obviously suffering. Even those who have everything in the world, their dissatisfaction shows that they are still suffering. So, we have to look at this precisely and the cause of that is confusion. We look at how we are confused, how we are completely trapped in the web of our confusion and suffering, and how we are constantly struggling within that. The innate mind or our buddha nature, whether it is in the state of enlightenment or in the state of ignorance, remains the same—immaculate and pure. When mind is veiled by ignorance, in the state of ignorance and delusion, we make mistakes and create karma through our actions; but the moment when wisdom that dispels ignorance and delusion arises, we understand the mistakes and the innate vast qualities of our mind shine forth. This is like two sides of the same coin. This has to do with the state of mind, that is, the presence or the absence of obscurations that prevent or allow us to see the nature of our mind or our buddha nature or the nature of reality.

The Buddha mastered the mind totally and that's why his wisdom is so profound, vast, and unfathomable. Through the wisdom that

scrutinizes thoroughly how phenomena exist and how they come about, one finds out their basic disposition. This is not about a religious belief system but about the nature of reality in the world. We are so attached to this life because we are not sufficiently introduced to the innate power and qualities of our mind, that is, our buddha nature, which every sentient being possesses and which imbues us with all basic goodnesses such as loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhicitta. Actually, studying and practicing the Dharma heal our wounded mind. We are completely permeated by the pollution of various afflictions and are traumatized in the vicious cycle of suffering, samsara, life after life, never getting any chance to have real peace and to see things clearly. Dharma is the only medicine and remedy to heal our mind from the root and reveal its total nature—suchness.

We are not sufficiently introduced to this life, past lives, and future lives. We think that past lives and future lives do not exist. Look at it this way: though we cannot see tomorrow or next year, as we come from yesterday and last year, we say “tomorrow,” “next year,” “next five years,” and so on. Similarly, there are past lives and future lives. People who possess clairvoyance know past and future lives. It seems ambiguous to us. But if we are introduced to it, have some understanding, and thereby acquire some wisdom, we have some foundation to study and practice the Dharma. Otherwise, we are totally devoted to this life’s benefit; we, as Dharma practitioners, practice only for this life’s peace and happiness. We talk about nirvana, but we have no idea. We are so much concerned about and occupied with this life. However, not being attached to this life does not mean that we do not care about this life. Of course, we care about this life, but if we have so much attachment to this life for just ourselves, we become so limited; we are not utilizing our potential, and there is no space to practice the Dharma. This is how Dharma is not following or becoming the Dharma. Even if you are meditating, chanting mantra, and doing visualization, still you are not practicing the Dharma. If you know this well and know that this life is like a dream, good or bad, it just goes on and then we move on to the next life, then in this life, we care more about the next life and the life after; not just for ourselves but for others as well. So, if you have this kind of understanding and attitude, this is called Dharma becomes the Dharma or mind follows the Dharma.

The second Dharma is “Dharma becomes the path.” In samsara no matter which of the six realms you are born in, still you are not free from suffering. Looking at the suffering in the hell realms, hungry ghost realm, animal realm, human realm, demi-god realm, and god realms, if we are

born into these conditions, we cannot stay happy forever; suffering is bound to come. So, we should prepare ourselves not to be reborn into these conditions. We have to free ourselves from this cyclic existence. For that, we have to see everything as impermanent, of illusory nature. No matter how much we achieve in samsara in this life, next life, and the life after, still we are not free from samsara. We must cross the border of samsara and go to the other side, the nirvana. In addition, we make effort to realize that there is no self. Of course, there is a notion of self to facilitate communication, like David, a table, or a cup, but self does not inherently exist as we perceive or as we are attached to. Thus, we should not be attached to the self, but rather we make effort to free ourselves from samsara to achieve nirvana. That is called Dharma follows or becomes the path toward complete enlightenment. More profound peace and happiness can be achieved through these. When you realize that there is no self that inherently exists and when you practice releasing attachment to self, there is less fear. We have so much fear because we are attached to the self. So we have to purify that.

The third Dharma is “the path dispels confusion or errors.” The path refers to the path to buddhahood which is not just for oneself, but for all sentient beings who have consciousness or mind, humans and nonhumans. Everyone desires peace and happiness, and no one desires to suffer, so, we share the same value. Contemplate on this. We have to take responsibility not only for ourselves but also for others. Oneself is just one individual; others are limitless, so others are more important. Understand that and develop altruistic thoughts which is based on our innate goodness of loving-kindness and compassion. As I want peace and happiness, everyone wants the same. As I want to be free from suffering, so does everybody. We share the same value, so meditate on this. Our mind is veiled and confined within the web of ego-grasping and duality, and we suffer within that.

Now, to really free ourselves from our bewilderment and suffering, to attain peace and happiness, and to see the mind’s unconfined vastness, which is like space, we need to develop bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment. We have to achieve buddhahood which does not exist elsewhere but within our mind. When our adventitious confusion, mental afflictions, and obscurations are there, we have no ability to kindle the fire of wisdom that burns them away to reveal the nature of our mind. When these obscurations are totally purified, one is called a buddha. A buddha attains total freedom from all boundaries, full awakening from all confusions, and total revelation of the mind that totally sees things as they are. As long as we are sentient beings in the samsara, in this state of

confusion, there is no way to be totally free from suffering and there is no way to have everlasting peace and happiness. So, we cultivate the mind to achieve the state of buddhahood—the dharmakaya, the nature of reality. For the confusion of attachment to this life, we practice impermanence. To counteract our confusion of self-cherishing, we practice bodhicitta. Through practicing relative bodhicitta based on immeasurable loving-kindness, compassion, and the three trainings or the *six perfections* (Sanskrit: paramitas), we accumulate lots of merits that become causes and conditions to purify the obscurations of self-grasping and dualistic mental afflictions, which allow us to finally perfect the ultimate bodhicitta and attain buddhahood.

To begin with, we have to realize that all that we perceive physically and mentally are just manifestations of many causes and conditions; nothing exists independently. Their real nature is emptiness. Emptiness does not mean nothingness or negation; emptiness is the nature of reality of all phenomena. We realize it when all mental obscurations are dissolved, and thus there is great peace and joy. Emptiness means that there isn't any phenomenon that exists independently and inherently. Everything, including our mental afflictions, exists out of causes and conditions. Everything manifests from emptiness and dissolves into emptiness. When you investigate and sort out all these causes and conditions, you do not find any independent entity. That is called illusory nature. Everything exists in illusory nature like reflections in a mirror, like clouds, like a magic show, like bubbles, like waves in the ocean. All are just manifestations. So, our perception of seeing everything as real, as permanent is an error or confusion which should be dispelled from the path towards complete enlightenment.

As we come to this realization, we reduce and purify all our karmic, afflictive, cognitive obscurations, and obscuration of habitual tendencies—step by step. Our mental obscurations of desire, anger, pride, jealousy, and so on, the cause of our suffering, are in the same way not real; they are manifestations of our habits or propensities. So, with strong confidence and conviction based on understanding and wisdom, realizing the nature of reality, we purify them courageously and fearlessly. It takes time to fully uproot these deeply rooted inveterate propensities like self-grasping, dualistic mental afflictions like attachment, aversion, and so on; these adventitious habits feel so natural to us since they have been with us over many lifetimes. To purify them, we need special insight or wisdom, courage to cultivate bodhicitta for the benefit of all sentient beings as an antidote, and mindfulness to constantly remind ourselves of the sameness and the illusory nature of

all phenomena, thereby not grasping at, not being attached to, or be averse to them. We need to meditate and practice step by step diligently. This is how confusion is removed from the path.

The fourth Dharma is “confusion dawns as wisdom.” The more we purify our obscurations, the more we see that they are just a play of the mind, like the waves of the ocean. When the waves of the ocean come, you see the waves; but when you look at the waves themselves, they are nothing but water. The waves of mental afflictions manifest from the ocean of mind and dissolve back into the mind. When the cloud of obscurations disappears into the sky of mind, the cloud exists nowhere; it is like a mirage. Then, there is great unafflicted peace and joy. Special insight or wisdom arises that allows you to see things precisely. Greater compassion also arises. Naturally, you can see how much all sentient beings are deluded due to self-grasping confusion, and they are suffering immensely for no purpose. Seeing this, powerful compassion will manifest. That compassion is called non-referential or non-objectified compassion which is the flavor of emptiness. In this way, there is liberation from all mental afflictions and obscurations. Thus, emptiness is not merely empty. It depends on many causes and conditions. When one develops the wisdom of emptiness that penetrates into the nature of reality of all phenomena, one realizes that everything is just a manifestation of causes and conditions, self-grasping does not exist and there is nothing to fear. That is why great bodhisattvas, even when they descend to the hell realm, have no fear—because they realize emptiness. As great compassion pervades emptiness, great bodhisattvas have no fear of helping sentient beings. In the end, all causes and conditions dissolve into emptiness, the nature of reality as-it-is. So, everything including these mental afflictions is nothing but emptiness. In this way, confusion dawns as wisdom since confusion does not exist by itself; it is nothing but wisdom. Then one is free from all suffering because the cause of suffering—all levels of obscurations—is taken care of. When one has the wisdom to know that afflictions are nothing but wisdom or emptiness, samsara itself is nirvana.

This is just a brief introduction to this book. We should understand that when we study and practice the Dharma, it is not just a belief system, but a means to journey toward complete enlightenment. It is a mental journey. We should study and practice the Dharma joyfully with courage, without flinching, fear, doubt, or hesitation, since suffering in samsara is so immense, unceasing, coming one after another. We work hard and devote ourselves totally to various activities; at the end of the day, there is no satisfaction. We are so deeply wounded by the waves of suffering.

To heal ourselves and be free from suffering, this book lays out clearly the way to follow the path and practice accordingly. This is not teaching just for Buddhists, but this is the wisdom of the Buddha that he imparted universally to everybody all over the world, everyone in the samsara. However, it is an individual's choice and responsibility, so we should have the wisdom to follow the path. In this way, slowly, slowly, we can reap peace and happiness. Even though sometimes our confusion and suffering are so immense and overwhelming, and our mind is overpowered, if we keep on cultivating our mind with the right method, we can reap peace and eventually reap the awakened mind within us. It is not something that somebody will do for us, nor can we free ourselves just by chanting some mantras, nor can some fully enlightened powerful deities come and grant us their attainments. Rather, they are just examples demonstrating to us how they have followed the path and attained enlightenment. We should follow their footsteps and practice. We take them as an inspiration that inspires us to fully utilize this life to joyfully follow the path to reveal our buddha nature by purifying our delusions and cultivating bodhicitta that embraces every sentient being.

I am indebted and grateful to Zabrina Leung for her full dedication to transcribing and compiling the teachings and many quotations from various resources. Without her tenacious effort and support, this book would not have been manifested to the public. The editor of this book, Lisa Buschmann, worked many hours making the language more beautiful and clearer for the readers and her many years of experience in the Dharma practice enriches the book. Because of our collective work and effort, this book will bring benefit to the world and help sentient beings finally attain the Vajradhara state of full buddhahood, thereby no longer needing to experience samsaric suffering.

Sarva Mangalam!

Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche

June 13, 2022



The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, the realization of the enlightened Gampopa, are the profound pith instructions of the path to buddhahood in four lines. To unfold their deep and vast meaning, Gampopa taught extensively, and many commentaries have been written by great masters including Lord Jigten Sumgön, the founder of Drikung Kagyu lineage, who said, “Of the 84,000 doors of Dharma taught by the Buddha, there is nothing that is not included in these four Dharmas. They are the complete and unmistakable path that leads to ultimate enlightenment.” This book contains the essence of Lord Jigten Sumgön’s commentaries as taught by Venerable Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche in a clear, compassionate, accessible, and complete way.

Gampopa (1074-1153), Milarepa’s heart disciple and the author of *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, merged and actualized the wisdom from the lineages of the Profound View, Vast Action, and Magnificent Blessing Realization, and attained buddhahood. Thereafter, he taught extensively, passing down his wisdom and realization through unbroken lineages and writings collected in five volumes. He is highly venerated and praised by all.

Venerable Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche was born in 1946 in Tsari, Tibet. After nine years of higher buddhist studies, he furthered his study with H.E. Khunu Lama and went into retreat under the guidance of H.E. Khyunga Rinpoche, Vajradhara Pachung Rinpoche, and Gelong Tenzin Nyima Rinpoche. After coming to USA in 1982 and founding the Tibetan Meditation Center, for forty years Rinpoche has been tirelessly travelling and showing the path that purifies obscurations and leads to perfect enlightenment to his disciples all over the world. Revered and beloved as an accomplished scholar, meditation master, teacher, translator, and author, like the sun that shines impartially upon all, Rinpoche’s radiance of compassion, vast knowledge and wisdom inspires, benefits, and ripens us all.

