

10. The Stages of the Doctrine: Selected Key Texts

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“The stages of the doctrine” or Tenrim, as it is known in Tibetan, refers to a specific genre of Tibetan spiritual writing that expound the general Mahayana Buddhist teachings of the bodhisattva path within the framework of a graded series of topics, from the practices required at the start of the bodhisattva’s career to the final perfect awakening of Buddhahood. Inspired by Atisha’s seminal work *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, there evolved within the Kadam school influential spiritual works that present the entire essence of the Buddhist thought and practice within an integrated system of an individual’s path to full awakening. These approaches and their associated texts came to be known as “stages of the path” (lam rim) and “stages of the doctrine” (ten rim).

The present volume contains three key texts belonging to this genre of lamrim/temrim class, all of which exerted seminal influence in shaping the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. First text, *The Blue Udder*, is a masterly work in verse attributed to the famed Kadam teacher Potowa who is accredited with the founding of the Kadam lineage of great treatises. This root work attracted commentaries from great Tibetan spiritual masters as well as became one of the key sources for Tsongkhapa’s *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. This text is followed by Gampopa’s revered *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, which remains to this day the most authoritative text on the understanding of the path to enlightenment in the Kagyü school of Tibetan Buddhism. The final text, *Elucidating the Intention of the Sage* by Sakya Pandita, was chosen for inclusion in *THE LIBRARY OF TIBETAN CLASSICS* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This masterly exposition of the bodhisattva’s path is critically important for understanding the general development of Buddhist thought and practice in Tibet during the critical period of eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Translation project funded by Tsadra Foundation.

Project Status: Work in progress.