

The Treasury of Good Sayings of Sa skya Pandita

the Eminent Tibetan Lama, 1182 - 1251

ལྷོ་ལེ་གསུང་པ་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་གཏེར་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་བསྟན་བཅོས།

Treasury of the Jewels of Good Sayings

Development of Awareness and Conduct

Edited by
Lozang Jamspal PhD

Translated during the summer of 1966 in Mussoorie, India,
by Lozang Jamspal and Ngawang Sonam Tenzin

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Dedicated
to the
Late
Ngagn Dbang Bsod Nams Bstan 'Zin
Jared Douglas Rhoton
(1941 - 1993)
Who Worked Respectfully and Diligently
on the
English Translation
of
this
Treasury of Good Sayings
1966

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Acknowledgments

The late Dr. Jared Douglas Rhoton, Nga dbang Bsod nams Bstan 'zin (Ngawang Sonam Tenzin), founded the Tibetan Classics Translators Guild (TCTG) of New York in 1986. Since then, I have been fortunate to have served as president and currently as director of this organization. Dr. Rhoton's consistent exhortation was to continue the work of the Guild. We get together several times a week. From these meetings are compiled our manuscripts. These get further revised, edited, commented upon, and may be translated into various languages. Some of these have already been published, while others (as of June 2003) still await publication.

PUBLISHED WORKS

Stages of Healing Body and Mind, Tibetan and English, by Lozang Jamspal, 2001.

Stages of Meditation by Vimalamitra, in two volumes, 2000, translated, edited, with commentary, by Lozang Jamspal.

Water and Tree Simile Treatise by Gung thang Bstan pa'i Sgron me, edited with a supplemental appendix, "Historical Changes in the Tibetan Language" 1999, in Tibetan by Lozang Jamspal.

Praise to the Buddha in One hundred and Fifty Verses, by Mātṛceṣa (tri-lingual edition; Sanskrit root text, Tibetan edition, Sanskrit-Tibetan glossary, Hindi translation, and commentary written in Tibetan), 1998, by Lozang Jamspal.

Procedures for Learning Classical Tibetan, 1996, by Lozang Jamspal.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

The Range of the Bodhisattva: The Treatise of Truth Teller, Skt. *Bodhisattva-gocara-upāya-viśaya-vikurvāṇa-nirdeśa*, *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod yul kyi thabs kyi rnam par 'phrul pa bstan pa* (edited Tibetan text and English translation in two volumes). This is my 1991 PhD dissertation for Columbia University.

The Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva. I revised some verses according to the original Sanskrit text and Prajñākaramati's commentary, and also edited the Tibetan and English translations. Except for a few verses, Dr. Rhoton and I first completed the English translation between 1964 and 1969. Now, the Guild is in the slow process of re-reading the Tibetan and English translations, and making corrections where necessary.

The Amarakośa of Situ Mahāpaṇḍita. We transferred his Tibetan transliteration of the root Sanskrit text into Devanāgarī script and juxtaposed it with Situ's Tibetan translation, and put it on computer. We then compiled a Sanskrit-Tibetan word index in both Devanāgarī and Tibetan scripts, and put that on computer. The Tibetan-Sanskrit word index has been compiled, but still must be put on computer in both Tibetan and Devanāgarī scripts, following the format of the Sanskrit-Tibetan word index.

The Lam rim dmar khrid myur lam (Quick Practical Path to Enlightenment) by Pan chen Bol bzang Yes shes, was translated at the request of the late Venerable Lama Tenzin of the Maui Dharma Center.

CONTRIBUTORS

The following have generously given their valuable time, skill, scholarly expertise, and/or financial help to the TCTG: Professor Alex and Hideko Wayman, Doctors Philip and Natalie Hauptman, William Kirtz, Joshua and Diana Cutler, Norman Guberman, Sharon Azar-Hahn, Scott Hoyt, Irene Geary, PhD, David Kittay, David Dell, PhD, Dennis Cordell, Kathleen Kernell, Elia Sinaiko, PhD, Serinity Young, PhD, Margot Jarrett, Nancy Haynes and Michael Metz, David Dell, PhD, Noe Dinnerstein, David Mellins, Susan Altabel, Michele Becker, Susan Sinberg Landesman, PhD, Marie Frequegnon, PhD, Arthur Mandelbaum, Donald Larocca, Deborah Sommer, PhD, Ronald Bogdan, Wyatt Harlan, and Kurt Keuzer, PhD.

TIBETAN EDITION OF THE TEXT AND ITS COMMENTARY

I wish to express my gratitude to Lama Pema Wangdak of the Palden Sakya Center for giving me his computer version of the Tibetan text of Sa skya Paṇḍita's *Good Sayings*. Using that as a starting point, our present Tibetan edition was further modified, primarily relying upon the Bkra shis lhun po edition, edited by the Venerable Dngul chu Dharma-bhadra (1772 – 1851).

I am also very thankful to Gene Smith of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, New York. Gene, a pioneer historian and preservationist of Tibetan literature, provided a copy of the Dmar ston commentary on the *Good Sayings*. Based on the commentary, I wrote the stories and annotations found in the Tibetan and English annotations sections.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Ngawang Sonam Tenzin and I first made the draft translation of this text in 1966, except for the following verses: Ch. 1, vv. 2, 9, 15; Ch. 2, vv. 15, 16; Ch. 3, vv. 24 – 34; Ch. 4, v. 21; Ch. 5, vv. 6, 8, 22, 36, 37; Ch. 6, v. 22, 46, 48, 51; Ch. 7, v. 31; Ch. 8, v. 36, 54, 56, 65, 70; Ch. 9, vv. 45, 46 (which have not been translated). The Guild has been revising our original translation since the mid-1990s. We've juxtaposed it with the Tibetan so as to preserve that text, and provided English equivalents for each Tibetan word.

The following people kindly helped to edit the English translation of this work: Deborah Sommer, Natalie Hauptman, Nancy Haynes, Kathleen Kernell, Susan Altabet, David Kittay, Wyatt Harlan, Susan Sinberg Landesman, Margot Jarrett. Norman Guberman, Kun tu bzang po, helped with his editorial expertise by carefully reading through the completed English translation and painstakingly finalizing the book for publication. I am very thankful to all the volunteers for their altruism and effort in preserving the classical Tibetan language, and also to Dge bshes Blo bzang Tshe brtan for proofreading our various Tibetan texts for publication.

While sorting through some papers during the early months of 2002, Dr. Philip Hauptman found two manuscript pages from the then unpublished *Water and Tree Simile Treatise* of the sage Gung thang Bstan

pa'i Sgron me. In them, I had prepared word-for-word equivalents for the Tibetan language students, where the meaning of each word from the Tibetan text was given an English equivalent. He asked me for the whole copy of this work, and after going through it exclaimed, "These English word equivalents are extremely useful for learning to read and understand the Tibetan!" Inspired by this coincidence, I thought that I should also make word-for-word equivalents to help the many young Tibetan-speaking people who are currently more literate in English than in their own native language. By the end of 2002, I had completed the word-equivalents portion of the *Good Sayings*.

I'm also grateful to Sharon Azar-Hahn, who, at the last moment, enthusiastically volunteered to make the beautiful drawing of Sa skya Pandita's hand-implements emblem, which is found on the back cover.

Preface

Aum May it be auspicious!

I make adoration to the feet of Kun dga' Rgyal mtshan,
The Paṅḍita, who, through the blessing of Mañjuḥṣa,
Possessing an intellect encompassing all knowable objects,
Mastered all branches of learning.

From among the great examples of Tibetan literature, the *Treasury of Good Sayings* stands out as a most wonderful and useful treatise. It is like an infallible good teacher showing the necessary ways of practicing virtue and avoiding nonvirtue; a righteous king carrying out worldly affairs without contradicting the Dharma; the Great Divine Drum, exhorting practice for the benefit of self and others; an excellent horse, carrying one to both temporary and ultimate goals; the sun free from clouds, spreading the light of knowledge; a wish-fulfilling jewel, attaining all intended aims; a bright lamp, dispelling the darkness of ignorance; and a divine wishing tree, perfecting the benefit of self and others. Therefore, all thoughtful people should respectfully use it to engage themselves in studying, contemplating and cultivating its meanings.

Good knowledge makes one a good person. For, without good knowledge one is as if blind and cannot see or judge what is appropriate or inappropriate.

One can get and develop knowledge through (i) hearing from others or reading a book oneself; (ii) contemplating those meanings one has heard or read, or discussing it with someone who knows this subject well; and (iii) cultivating the meaning of what one has heard or read and then contemplated. When one further blends these three knowledges with one's own intuitive or innate knowledge, and thereby uses those four knowledges, one's efforts will succeed in achieving their goal.

The composer of the *Treasury of Good Sayings* came forth as a result of the merit of the Land of Snow [Tibet]. A human form of Mañjuśrī, deity of wisdom, he was renowned as Sa skya Paṅḍita Kun dga' Rgyal

mtshan throughout the three realms.

Encouraged and inspired by his *Good Sayings*, the sage Kung thang Bstan pa'i Sgron me {1762 – 1822} composed two aphoristic treatises, *Good Sayings with Water Similes* and *Good Sayings with Tree Similes*. In the latter, he praises Sa skya Pandita as follows:

In the milk ocean of my throat
Plays the Goddess Melody [Sarasvati],
While from my mouth blossom forth
waves of *Good Sayings with Tree Similes*.

This [treatise] relies upon the *Good Sayings*
Of Glorious Sa skya Paṇḍita,
Whose famed jewel garland
Spanned the lands of Tibet and China.

**A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF KUN DGA' RGYAL MTSHAN,
COMPOSER OF THE GOOD SAYINGS, FOLLOWING TIBETAN SOURCES**

He was born in Sa skya in the water tiger year of the third *rab byung*, 1182, and passed away in the iron pig year of the fourth *rab byung*, 1251. His father was Dpal chen and his mother Nyi khri. When Kung dga' was crawling he used to repeat some words that the mother did not understand and over which she worried. She inquired of the boy's uncle, the learned adept Reverend Grags pa Rgyal mtshan, and asked, "This boy says unclear words. Does he not have a speech defect?" Hearing the boy was saying some Sanskrit words, he replied to the mother: "Your son does not have a speech defect."

Kun dga' Rgyal mtshan later took pious lay vows (*upāsaka*) and received guru yoga (Tib. *bla ma mchod pa*) from his uncle. He tells of the experience and results of his guru (spiritual teacher) yoga as follows:

When I was young and asked [my uncle, reverend Grags pa] for guru yoga blessing, he said, "You would not have a perception regarding me as a Buddha, but would have a perception regarding me as your uncle and, so, you would be unable to practice its devotion," and did not bestow the guru yoga upon me. Some-time later when I was not feeling well, there came to me a dreadful sign of death. At that time [his uncle] the Precious Dharma Lord also was not feeling well. I did service for him continually, day and night, without considering sleep, food, or drink. Then he bestowed on me the guru yoga blessings. Giving rise to a perception regard-ing the guru as the Buddha, I saw him as Noble Mañjuśrī, embodiment of all the Buddhas. Through this extraordinary belief and devotion, I was liberated from the sign of death and began feeling very well. Since then, I have been able to perfectly understand grammar, logic, poetry, prosody, rhetoric, secret mantra, the perfections, metaphysics, the monas-tic code, all the scriptural usages and reasonings, and so forth. A genuine confidence towards all the Buddha's teachings

has arisen in me. The triad of gods, humans and ghost spirits are kindly disposed towards me. The Indian kings and other dignitaries respect me and have received teachings from me. And, as well, I have acquired a little spiritual realization. At that time when my guru manifested the state of not feeling well, he did it in order to benefit me. Actually he was not sick. If anyone else should follow my example, there can be no doubt that he or she would be as successful.

The precious young Sa skya Paṇḍita then with great effort continually devoted himself to his studies. The *Sa skya gdung rabs (Sa skya Chron-icles)*, p. 110, records the following event:

There were many inconceivable wondrous activities, although only a portion of them are expressed here. When this great one was eighteen years old, near the Glorious Sa skya A phyi 'bum, over the course of a month he dreamt of a slight though not emaciated, bluish-complexioned monk pandita who was “the second buddha,” Ācārya Vasubandhu. In his dreams he studied Abhi-dharma with this monk, and when he awoke from sleep, he understood all the words and meanings of the Abhi-dharma.” Later, when he studied this [same subject] with the great Kash-miri Paṇḍita [Śākyaśrībhadra], there was not much difference from the former.

This wonderful dream learning was a manifestation of the clarity and engagement of study that came from his former-life propensity for the Abhidharma. From a young age he had mastered all the five sciences of Sanskrit grammar, art, medicine, logic, and the spiritual studies, and became widely known as the Sa skya Paṇḍita. Till the age of twenty-seven he remained a pious lay *upāsaka*, whereupon he became a monk under the abbotship of the Mahāpaṇḍita Śākyaśrī. He had occasion to study with Śākyaśrī as well as many other learned Indian Buddhist monks who had escaped to Tibet from India as a result of the Muslim persecution there.

Sa skya Paṇḍita taught Buddhism in many places of Tibet, such as at Bsam yas monastery and so forth. He composed many treatises, which have been collected in three volumes. Among all his works this *Treasury of Good Sayings* is the most popular. The treatise *Elucidation of the Sage's Intent (Thub pa'i dgongs gsal)* was written in his old age in China, and sent as his gift to his disciples in Tibet. It quotes many verses from the *Good Sayings*. In the epilogue to the *Elucidation*, he wrote:

I explained this teaching to people all over the provinces of Dbus and Gtsang. All of my disciples have received the oral transmission of this teaching. Therefore, everyone should read this writing, teach others, and practice [virtue] according to it.

While teaching in Bsam yas monastery, Sa skya Pandita composed the following verses. (See the back-cover portion of the Illustrations section.) They praise Glorious Śāntarakṣita, master Padma-sambhava, Venerable Kamalaśīla, the Indo-Tibetan translators, King Khrisrong Lde btsan, and his own ability as opposed to the ability of others.

Well-disciplined holy Glorious Śāntarakṣita,
Glorious adept yogi Padmasambhava,
Clear intellect Venerable Kamalaśīla,
And so forth are second Victors.

The fundamental source for the translation, editing,
and annotation
Of the unexcelled Sugata's doctrine,
The two-language speakers' luminous minds
Are our eyes in this degenerate time.

The human lord, righteous king with
Gentle intelligence, disciplined beings.
Surrounded by a host of heroic wise ministers,
He perfectly sustained all his subjects as his own children.

Propelled by previous karma, I too
Came here to be born in the Land of Snow.
By the power of previous lives' mastery,
With little effort, I understood most
fields of study.

In these degenerate times, there are some
Who, proclaiming themselves as sages,
strive to gain knowledge and teach,
Were they to review their studies even
a hundred times,
They would attain only a partial view.

[From the collected works of Sakya Pandita, p. 486, Vol. 3]

Sa skya Paṇḍita stayed in Tibet till the age of sixty-two teaching, writing books, and performing other religious activities. He had a great compassion for the people in eastern Tibet, who were being persecuted by the invading Mongols.

According to the *Sa skya Chronicle*, "Mongolians are more benighted than animals about the practice of virtue and the avoidance of nonvirtue; have even less compassion than Yama (Lord of Death); have more physical power than the demonic spirits; and their ranks are as innumerable as the demigods. First the Mongolian army overran China and then northeastern Tibet. They are merciless to everyone, whether householder or monk."

His ordination abbot, Mahāpaṇḍita Śākyaśribhadra, as well as his spiritual guide, his uncle, Reverend Grags pa Rgyal mtshan, had both prophesied that in his later age Mongolians would invite him to come there. If he went, it would be helpful for the [spread of the] teaching of the Buddha and for sentient beings,

and that he should go there. Therefore, at the age of sixty-one he began making preparations to go. At the age sixty-two, Prince Godan, grandson of Genghis Khan, invited him to Mongol China. Here is an excerpt from the letter the Mongol delegation carried to Sa skya from the prince.

I the King rely upon the glory of merit to make Sa skya Pandita Kun dga' Rgyal mtshan understand this speech. To repay the kindness of parents and circumambience, I need a perfect spiritual guide to teach the practice of the cultivation of virtue and avoidance of nonvirtue.

We have determined that you can perform this task. Therefore, you should come here without considering the difficulty of the journey. Were you to respond, "I am old" [and refuse my request, think], how many lives the Lord of Sages [Buddha] previously sacrificed. This would go against your understanding of the doctrine and show a lack of concern about my invading army harming many living beings. Therefore, thinking of the doctrine of Bud-dha and the benefit of many living beings, you should come quickly.

Although he was too old to travel, because of the reasons stated above without considering his difficulties, Sa skya Paṇḍita commenced travel to Mongolia. He arrived in northern Mi nyag at the age sixty-three. At the age of sixty-five in the fire male horse year (1246) he arrived at Lang ju. The next year, in the first month of the fire sheep year, Sa skya Paṇḍita met Prince Godan who had just returned from Mongolia.

The prince was very pleased with their discussion on many fields of religion and politics. Till then, Mongol shamans used to sit in the uppermost row. But, after this the prince made a rule that the monks would sit at the honoured seats and not the shamans.

Godan suffered from leprosy. When Sa skya Paṇḍita performed a healing ritual for the prince, he was freed from the disease and thereby acquired great faith in the religion. He received numerous teachings for generating the spirit of enlightenment and the attaining of insight. He honoured Sa skya Paṇḍita as head of the monks. After this, many people who previously had not had faith in the religion came to have faith in it. Sa skya Paṇḍita placed many faithful ones in the Great Vehicle. In short, he matured countless beings on the path of liberation and widely spread Buddha's teaching.

The following are excerpts from a letter Sa skya Pandita sent to the Tibetans from Mongol China:

I, Sa skya Paṇḍita, write to all my spiritual friends and patrons from Dbus, Gtsang and Mnga' ris. I have come here to Mongolia with the general intention to benefit Buddha's Teaching and sentient beings, and, in particular, to benefit all the Tibetan-speaking people....

Please, do not say, "Sa skya Paṇḍita has gone to Mongolia, and is no longer helpful to us." Having an intention more loving of others than of myself, I have come here to benefit all Tibetan-speaking people. If you find what I say agreeable, it will be beneficial. If you believe what you have heard, then it will be difficult. You have not seen the situation here.

Because of that you might think that we can still manage it. But, while you are off guard, were there suddenly to come a bad time, like an oppressing ghost, I am afraid that all our young boys could come under the control of the Mongols....

I do not have any regrets whatever happens, good or bad, to me. Also, by the grace of the Bla ma and the Three Jewels, it will become possible for good things to occur. All of you should also pray to the Three Jewels. The king has shown an extraordinarily kind heart to me. Because of this the learned monks as well as all the Chinese, Tibetan, Yugur, Mi nyag and others peoples consider it wonderful to be listening to the Teaching. Please do not worry about any harm coming from the Mongols to those of us who are here. We are well and beloved by all....

It would be helpful to bring quality goods produced in our own country. Gold will be best to achieve our aims. Please think about it.

May Buddha's teaching flourish in all directions.

Mangalam

Sa skya Chronicle, pp. 136 – 140.

In this manner, the great Sa skya Pandita performed his work to bring Tibetan Buddhism to Mongolia and China.

Beginning with the Buddha's immediate disciple, Subhūti, Sa skya Paṇḍita is the sixth of the Panchen Lamas' former seventeen incarnations. In the recitation prayers of Bkra shis lhun po monastery, there is an adoration verse to each of these incarnations. The verse to Sa skya Paṇḍita is quoted at the beginning of the preface.

May the rays of sunlight from the *Good Sayings* of Sa skya Paṇḍita increase the wisdom of the literate, dispel the darkness of illiteracy, and spread the light of the knowledge of literature among the people of the Land of Snow.

Lozang Jamspal

New York

April 2003

[Note: Reformatted Original Tibetan Preface to follow at a later time.]