



The Words of My Perfect Teacher

Patrul Rinpoche , Padmakara Translation Group (Translator) , Dalai Lama XIV (Foreword by) , Dilgo Khyentse (Foreword by) , Jigme Lingpa

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Featuring a preface by Dalai Lama, a classic handbook written in the nineteenth century outlines the spiritual practices common to all Tibetan Buddhist traditions and makes them accessible through examples from daily life. Original. 10,000 first printing.

The Words of My Perfect Teacher Details

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From Reader Review *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* for online ebook

Erica Jones says

I believe this text is best understood with its historical context and intended audience in mind, i.e., written by a Tibetan guru born in 1808, died in 1887, so rather don't skip over the several introductions to the text, which includes a historical overview of the development of Tibetan Buddhism. I very much enjoyed the vernacular language and ordinary expressions and speech used in this translation, coming to feel a close familiarity with the occasionally ornery-sounding Rinpoche, with his endless (and amusing) excoriation of sloppy and lazy practitioners and lamas alike.

Being skeptical of the guru tradition and yet intuitively drawn to Vajrayana Buddhism, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* provided a great introduction of what to look for - and beware of - in a teacher or "spiritual friend," as one might look upon him or her. The endnotes can add much valuable explanation to the main text and I would recommend not skipping them for the most part. (This admittedly becomes rather annoying towards the end where they are so numerous.)

Let us note one of the major pitfalls of spiritual practice, in observance of Rinpoche's sage words in the Conclusion of the book:

"On separate occasions, my teacher also used to give numerous special instructions for exposing hidden faults, and I have added whatever I have been able to remember of these in the most appropriate places. Do not take them as a window through which to observe others' faults, but rather as a mirror for examining your own. Look carefully within yourself to see whether or not you have those hidden faults. If you do, recognize them and banish them. Correct your mind and set it at ease on the right path." (p.369)

Analyzing everyone else may prove quite alluring and even provide a false sense of control (and a certain, toxic spiritual pride) but such an orientation in the end bears no fruit, a massive waste of this precious life with all its freedoms and advantages.

"To see what you have done before, look at what you are now.
To see where you are going to be born next, look at what you do now." (p. 113)

Alonzo says

I read this out of curiosity more than out of a desire to live this way. Tibetan Buddhism is the most ritualistic and "religious" of the forms of Buddhism that I have looked at so far. And, a lot of the information in this book is meant to be used in conjunction with the oral transmission of a qualified teacher. Much of it seems to require the learner/practitioner/student to live monastically, but apart from that, the teaching on equalizing and exchanging, and on bodhicitta are worth the time to read, not only for Buddhists but for anyone interested in living better in this violent world.

Those chapters, which reinforced what I have learned on these subjects from other books, were very helpful in overcoming difficult emotions and thought processes. Those teachings have helped me look at the world and at other people differently.

I am far from a Bodhisattva, and quite honestly, don't know whether that is a state that I could ever attain, but

just attempting to cultivate a heart and mind of love and compassion will help make (at least my part of) the world a better place.

joe says

This is one of the most important books ever to be translated from Tibetan to English. It is a must read for anyone interested in Buddhism or Tibet.

Nate says

This book is what they call a potential "Game changer of life". If you take it seriously and read it carefully, then it is one that can change your life. It is non sectarian (drime), funny, sad, blunt, poetic, graceful, scholarly, sacred, poignant, direct, circumspect and always wise. How many books do you know that fit this category? It has already deeply changed my friend's life who is Islamic and changing the priorities of his life for the real, practical and to become a kinder, humbler, wiser more loving person. You will need eventually a lama or rinpoche and I suggest the Khyentse lineage but there are many authentic lineages in the Nyingma and Kagyu lineages. Dilgo Khyentse read this book many times over even in his 80's before he passed on. Yet there are many Geluk Stories about Geshes as well making it quite non sectarian. This is what Dzongsar Khyentse said about the book "This book alone should be like a guardian of Vajrayana Buddhism. It exemplifies how to read a master, how to judge a master and how to judge a practitioner. Of course, every page is very important and, although you can't really leave anything out, in our minds we tend to divide like that."

Lorilee says

This is a book to reference rather than read like a novel. It's inspiring, interesting, even intriguing. It pushed my thought to a deeper level.

Mary Overton says

"In ancient times, when Sakyamuni [The Buddha of our time] in a previous life was a king called Padma, a serious epidemic broke out amongst his subjects and many of them died. The king called the doctors and asked how the disease should be treated.

"'This sickness can be cured with the flesh of the rohita fish,' they said. 'But the disease has so obscured our minds that we can think of no other remedy.'

"On the morning of an auspicious day the king bathed, donned new clothing and performed a ceremony of confession and purification. He made great offerings to the Three Jewels and prayed fervently, saying, 'As soon as I die, may I immediately be reborn as a rohita fish in the Nivritta river!'

"He then cast himself down from the heights of his palace - one thousand cubits - and was immediately reborn as a fish, crying out in human speech, 'I am a rohita fish, take my flesh and eat it!'

"Everyone came to eat it. As soon as one side was eaten, the fish turned over and offered them the other side. While they were cutting off the flesh, the first side became whole again. In this way, by eating each side alternately, everybody who was ill could be cured. Then the fish spoke to them all.

"I am Padma, your king. I gave up my life and took birth as a rohita fish to save you from the epidemic. As an expression of your gratitude, give up doing evil and do all the good you can.'

"They all obeyed him and thenceforth never again fell into evil rebirths.

"Another time Sakyamuni had been reborn as a giant turtle, when a boat transporting five hundred merchants was wrecked at sea.

"They were all about to drown, but the turtle called out to them in human speech: 'Get up on my back! I will carry you all to safety!'

"The turtle carried all the merchants to dry land, and then collapsed exhausted by the water's edge, and fell asleep. But as it slept, a cloud of eighty thousand ketaka flies began to suck its blood. Waking up, it saw how many they were and realized that to go back into the water or roll on the ground would kill all the insects. So it just lay where it was, giving them its life.

"Later, when the turtle became the Buddha, the flies were the eighty thousand gods who listened to his teachings and perceived the truth." pp. 230-231

Isaac Spencer says

Patrul's words are like pouring the juiciest, sweetest balm onto a dry, desiccated heart. The result being that one knows what is important in life and all the ways one fools oneself.

Patrul doesn't mince words. There are no fluffy bunnies to be found here.

Patrul's words are a blast in the ear of those (including myself) asleep with selfishness.

Jason says

A concise, clear exposition of the preliminary practices of the *Longchen Nyingtig* cycle of teachings of Nyingma Vajrayana ("Tibetan") Buddhism. This book plus live teacher plus diligent practice is Buddhist alchemy.

It covers the gamut of the Vajrayana Buddhist teachings, beginning with the Mahayana "ordinary" or "outer preliminaries": cultivating the right attitude of compassion and loving-kindness, developing an appreciation for the transient nature of existence and a revulsion for the impermanent things that perpetuate discontent, and coming to a deep understanding of the law of moral cause-and-effect. This comprises approximately 1/3

of the text, but as Patrul Rinpoche repeats time and again, they are only "ordinary" and "preliminary" in the sense that they prepare the ground for the deeper work of the Vajrayana; they are complete practices for self-overcoming and awakening in their own right.

The second 2/3 of the work consists of more explicitly Vajrayana stuff, the teachings and practices that are intended to *really* prepare one for tantric Buddhist study with a spiritual teacher (or "dangerous friend," signifying the power and risk of these teachings). These "extraordinary", "internal" preliminaries begin with the practice of taking refuge by means of doing full-body prostrations while intoning a mantra and visualizing a complex refuge mandala. Subsequent practices explained in some detail include arousal of bodhicitta, mandala offerings to cultivate generosity (including an explanation of *Chöd* practice, which blew my mind), and guru yoga.

The final practice detailed in the book (perhaps unsurprisingly given the recent upswing of my interest in the bardo, the Book of the Dead, DMT experiences—and *meaningful coincidences!*) is that of *phowa*, or transmission of the consciousness directly into the "clear light" at death. AKA Go to straight to enlightenment, do not pass go.

Needless to say, this book has me fired up to practice.

J says

As someone who has spent a lot of time reading and being involved in Tibetan Buddhism, I rate this book. It's a solid translation of the original text and has a foreword by HH as well as Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. For non Buddhists, I am not sure how much the book would appeal but it still provides an excellent summation of the Tibetan perspective. I am currently holidaying overseas with foreign language bookstores everywhere so it is a companion I am really glad that I brought for those longer nights stuck in the hotel.

tammy says

If one feels drawn to Buddhism, Words of My Perfect Teacher provides a clarity and depth of understanding that is unmatched.

Amie says

Five stars! Buried in here is the strangest little poem. I would tell you about it, but it ends with the line "keep this in your heart, don't go telling people about it"

Suzanne Arcand says

This book is 2/3 great and 1/3 interesting only for people who are fascinated by the minutes details of Tibetan Buddhism.

I need to come clean and say up front that for years I belonged to a Tibetan Buddhist church. I still consider myself Buddhist but reading Words of my Perfect Teacher helped me understand my discomfort with Tibetan Buddhism and Buddhism in general.

The first three chapters are very useful for any practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism. They are not however to be recommended as an introduction. One needs to be somewhat familiar with Tibetan Buddhism, before reading this book.

I did underline a lot in the chapter called “The Freedoms and Advantages”. I could read this chapter over and over again and learn something every time. I want to share a quote that could be meaningful in many circumstances:

“Pride, lack of faith and lack of effort,
Outward distraction, inward tension and discouragement;
These are the six stains.”

Things did go wrong with chapter three when the author describes the eighteen hells, still this chapter ended on a high note with beautiful advices from Padampa Sangye and lead to a couple of great chapters Cause and Effects, Taking Refuge and Arousing Bodhichitta.

But from page 263 on I pushed and pushed and pushed through this book until, I finally came to my senses, realize that it wasn't for me and gave it up. The practices described in the last sections of the book are far too esoteric for me. They are very useful, even beautiful, for people who are interested in Guru Yoga but they are definitely not for everyone. These practices are useful means for getting closer to Buddhahood. I have not met a single person yet, who didn't strike me as wise and more compassionate for having done them. But they are just too foreign from my way of thinking which is much more secular.

And this is how “Words of my Perfect Teacher” helped me realize that Tibetan Buddhism wasn't for me. However I still consider myself Buddhist and I will keep searching and reading until I can answer this question: Can someone who doesn't believe in reincarnation be a Buddhist?

Arnaud Versluys says

This book is the seminal primer to understand and practice the ngondro or preliminaries in the Nyingma Nyingthig tradition. I first read it 15 years ago and i find myself coming back to it over and over and discovering fresh instructions each time! ??

Vanessa says

still reading. it is beautifully written.

okay...finished, well sort of. some of this is not appropriate for where i am on my path, very dense information and descriptions of very formal procedures on taking refuge, vows, following a teacher, guru yoga, etc. some of this text was incredibly humbling and inspiring and some felt quite rigid and strict, written for monks in a different cultural context. this would be a good book to have on hand to refer to and return to as one journeys on the Buddhist path and i expect i will come back to it later. there were some pointers for obstacles and antidotes to meditation that were good to read. or more so ways of turning the mind from habitual patterns such as jealousy and comparison, greed and selfishness, etc.

the first part of the book was most helpful to me--the 8 hells were very graphically described and aroused a sense of compassion for those of us living in hell realms through our mental projections. also, after reading Shantideva's Way of the Bodhisattva, it was useful to read the practical aspects of taking the Bodhisattva vow, which i have in my heart but not yet formally, but will be in Januaray. it was good to read more about the process and tradition.

Henry says

A book that all Vajrayana Buddhists should have. Consider this, I just know a couple of English-speaking Vajrayana Buddhists in person, and two of them recommended this book to me. Although written as a beginner's guide of preliminary practice Longchen Nyingthik of Nyingma school, it includes many fundamental Dharma teachings that apply to all schools and traditions. The translation "preliminary" is misleading, my root guru Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche said, because even some great achieved lamas had kept practicing Longchen Nyingthik all through their lives. If one is interested in learning Buddhism and Vajrayana, Words of My Perfect Teacher can be his first book for this purpose and continue serving as a reference guide.

Great Venerable Patrul Rinpoche was an eminent 19-century Tibetan monk, tulku, scholar and author, well known for being an ardent exponent of Rime Movement that promotes respect for all Buddhist schools and traditions and preservation of important teachings from them. It is very challenging to become a Rime teacher, because one has to learn persistently all through his life from teachers of all schools (Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, Gelug, etc.) and become an expert. That's why Rime lamas are highly respected in all schools. Patrul Rinpoche had lived a life of austerity, staying in caves and wilderness, and devoted his life for liberation of all sentient beings. He's inarguably a master and achiever, a realized pandita and emanation of buddhas and bodhisattvas. When I read this book, I did that with high veneration and inexpressible gratitude and I feel happy that this book has been well embraced in English speaking world and the West.

Travis says

Very fundamentalist take on Vajrayana Buddhism. Prepare for lots of elaborate descriptions of hell realms. Not your typical feel-good, yuppie Buddhism.

Paul says

My favorite quote so far...

There is not a single being in samsara, this immense ocean of suffering, who in the course of time without beginning has never been our father or mother. When they were our parents, these beings' only thought was to raise us with the greatest possible kindness, protecting us with great love and giving us the very best of their own food and clothing... Tell yourself: "It is for their well-being that I am going to listen to the profound Dharma and put it into practice."

Keith says

A clear, though not concise, guide to the preliminary practices ("ngöndrö") of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Vajrayana (tantric Buddhism). While specifically focusing on the Longchen Nyingtig ("Heart Essence of Longchen Rabjampa") terma tradition in the lineage of Jigme Lingpa, the exposition is equally applicable to virtually any Dzogchen ngöndrö system (though the few details given regarding specific visualizations may need to be modified to fit the practitioner's sadhana subject to the instruction of one's own lama). The teachings on the Outer Preliminaries, which account for more than half of the book, are likewise equally applicable to the foundations of Mahayana practice in any of the Tibetan traditions. Of all the many books I collected regarding ngöndrö, this is the one I found myself turning to most often; even more so than to the commentaries on the specific sadhana I was given.

Jodelle Lai says

The Words of My Perfect Teacher summarizes in a very detailed way of the things that Tibetan-Buddhist people believe in. It is marvellous and very inspirational. It opens up or allows people to be spiritually connected to the divine. This is a great book that I highly recommend to people who believe and respect Tibetan Buddhism to read. Patrol Rinpoche did a great job explaining in a very simple way of how this universe work.
