

Audio-instructional series – 3

A WORKBOOK
ON
TIBETAN PRONUNCIATION

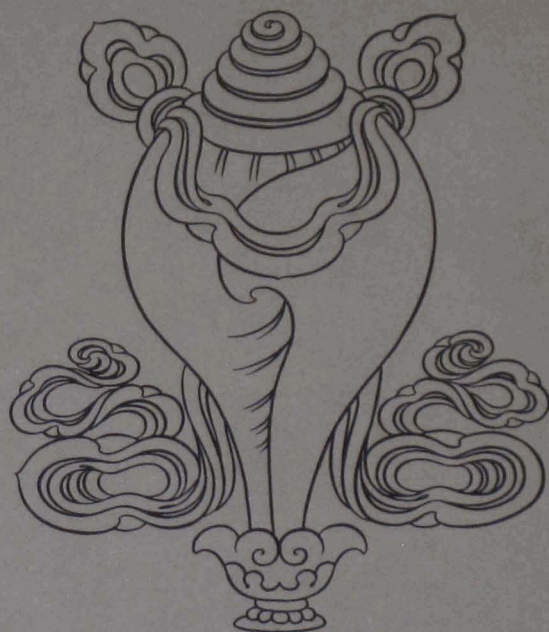
[INTERMEDIATE LEVEL]

by

Ngawangthondup Narkyid

and

Kenneth Liberman



LIBRARY OF TIBETAN WORKS & ARCHIVES

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Foreword

This small book of Tibetan conversational drills has been compiled from the materials of an intensive class in the central Tibetan dialect, organized in 1985 by Prof. Kenneth Liberman in Eugene, Oregon, U.S.A.. This class was taught daily for three weeks to a group of sixteen enthusiastic students.

Although my name appears on the book, in fact it was Prof. Liberman who was responsible for compiling it, giving up his precious time during 1986 to do so. Working with a wish to benefit others and without regard for his time, he has accomplished his intention. I feel that I and other Tibetans can learn something from his approach.

This work is an attempt to facilitate the language learning process of students trying to cope with a foreign language and relies upon a scientific approach to language learning.

Ngawangthondup Narkyid
Thekchen Choeling
McLeod Ganj, District Kangra
Dharamsala (H.P.) 176219
India

The intensive course in conversational Tibetan given by Ngawangthondup Narkyid in Eugene during the summer of 1985 contained a wealth of information about how to hear spoken Tibetan and presents information that is not available in most Tibetan language textbooks. Students are referred to Ngawangthondup Narkyid's *Three Study Tools* (third edition), published by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, India, which may be used as a companion volume.

This workbook provides extensive aural drill for the purpose of training the student's ear to recognize standard Tibetan pronunciation. For this reason, one must use the book along with its accompanying tape, recorded by Ngawangthondup Narkyid at the University of Oregon.

Kenneth Liberman
Department of Sociology
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403
U.S.A.

A Workbook On Tibetan Pronunciation [Intermediate Level]

Many speakers of European languages have a difficult time pronouncing Tibetan words correctly. Their principal problems lie in employing correct pitch [tone] and aspiration. These difficulties with pitch and aspiration also affect their ability to listen accurately. This brief workbook is designed to exercise the student's ears and to provide some practice in developing better pronunciation.

A frequent complaint of the Western student is that the spelling of Tibetan words is unreasonably difficult, yet accuracy in recognizing and producing correct pitch and aspiration provides information about correct spellings. Because pitch and aspiration are dictated by the Tibetan spelling, accurate recognition of pitch and aspiration allows one to infer the existence of pre-scripts [མོ་ལྷན་] or super-scripts [བརྟན་བ་] and hence assists one in grasping the correct meaning of the word being spoken. Many of the difficulties students have with listening, spelling and being properly understood can be alleviated through practice and drill in pronunciation.

1. Pitch and Aspiration

A word in Tibetan has either a high pitch or a low pitch and is either aspiration [voiceless] or unaspirated [voiced]. Unless a preceding syllable overrules the pitch or voice of a word, its pitch and aspiration are dictated by the principal or base letter of the word. The thirty consonants of the Tibetan language may be divided into four basic groups: high pitch/unaspirated, high pitch/aspirated, low pitch/unaspirated, and low pitch/aspirated:

Guide to Pitch and Aspiration

I	II	III	IV
ཀ་	ཁ་	ག་	ང་
ཅ་	ཆ་	ཇ་	ཉ་
ད་	ཐ་	ད་	ལ་
བ་	ཕ་	བ་	མ་
ཙ་	ཚ་	ཛ་	ཡ་
	ཤ་	ཞ་	ས་
	ཧ་	མ་	ལ་
ཨ་	ཉ་	འ་	ཐ་
High Pitch/ Unaspirated	High Pitch/ Aspirated	Low Pitch/ Aspirated	Low Pitch/ Unaspirated

Exercise 1. Pronounce each consonant correctly, following the tape. Each consonant will be read in turn, first down each column and then across the columns.

2. Aspiration

The letters in columns I and IV have no aspiration. The letters in columns II and III are aspirated. It is helpful, when checking one's aspiration, to employ the corner of a piece of lightweight paper.

Hold a corner of the paper up to your mouth: when a word with aspiration [voiceless] is uttered, the paper should move visibly; when the word is not aspirated, the paper should remain unmoved.

Exercise 2. Practice the aspiration and lack of aspiration in these sentences. Repeat the sentence in the interval provided on the tape. [An "a" signifies aspiration and an "ø" signifies that the word is unaspirated.]

1. ང་ ཁ་ རྩོམ་ གི་ འདུག
a ø

I am thirsty.

2. བྱིང་ རང་ གིས་ རྒྱབ་ རྒྱག་ འཕྲོགས་ ལོང་ |
a ø a

You were able to lift the chair.

3. ཁོས་འདིའི་གི་ རྣམ་ རག་ གནམ་ གནམ་ མེས་ ལོང་ |
a ø

He certainly knew the meaning of

Exercise 3. Practice the aspiration in these sentences.

1. ངས་ ལྷན་ ལ་ གཅིག་ འབྲོ་ བྱང་ ། I received a shovel.
 ཅ ཅ ཅ ཅ

2. ངས་ འདི་ རྗེས་ ལ་ སྤྱི་ གི་ ཡིན། I'll do it later.
 ཅ ཅ ཅ ཅ

When འ is subjoined to the consonants in columns one and two, the following columns result:

ཀ་	ཁ་
རྩ་	ལྩ་
བྩ་	འྩ་
མ་	མ་
བམ་	མ་
མ་	འམ་
མ་	མ་
རྩ་	
མ་	
མ་	

Exercise 4. Repeat these sounds after the tape.

Exercise 5. Practice the aspiration and lack of aspiration in these sentences. Pronounce the sentence correctly in the interval provided on the tape.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <p>1. ངས་ དེ་ རིང་ ལྷ་ བཀྲུས་ བ་ ཡིན།
 ø ø</p> | <p>Today I washed my hair.</p> |
| <p>2. ང་ རོ་ དགོང་ ལྷ་ རུའུ་ གི་ ཡིན།
 ø a</p> | <p>Tonight I will wash my hair.</p> |
| <p>3. ངའི་ རྩོད་ རུང་ ལྷ་ ལྷ་ དེ་ རུའུ་ དགོས་ ཡོད།
 ø a a</p> | <p>I need to wash my plaid shirt.</p> |

3. Pitch

There are two principal pitches in Tibetan - high pitch and low pitch. The letters in columns I and II always have a high pitch, and the letters in columns III and IV have a low pitch. Mastery of the correct pitch will spare one from a good deal of confusion in ordinary Tibetan conversation.

Exercise 6. Compare the pitch of these letters.

- | | |
|----|----|
| ལ་ | ག་ |
| མ་ | ང་ |
| ཤ་ | བ་ |

ག་ ལ་

ས་ ཟ་

ཐ་ ཏ་

Exercise 7. Practice the correct pitch in these sentences.

1. ལ་པར་ ག་ པར་ ཡོག་ རེད། Where is the telephone?
2. སོ་ འབྲུགས་ གི་ འདུག He feels cold.
3. སོ་ ཇ་ བཀུག་ གི་ འདུག He is bringing tea.
4. རུ་ ལ་ བྱུགས་ པ་ བརྒྱབ་ བཅ། The water was frozen.
5. སོ་ སྐོམ་ རྒྱག་ གི་ འདུག He is meditating.
6. ང་ ལྟོད་ སོག་ ཚྭ་ གི་ འདུག I am hungry.
7. སོ་ ལ་ སྐོམ་ གི་ རེད། He will be thirsty.
8. ལང་ བའི་ རྒྱང་ ལ་ གངས་ འདུག There is snow on the house.
9. སོང་ ལ་ ལྟུ་ རོགས་ གནང་། Please ask him/her. (Please tell
10. ཡི་ གི་ འདི་ བཤུ་ རོགས་ གནང་། Please copy this letter.

11. མོ་ ལམ་ རྒྱལ་ བཤོག་ གི་ འདུག
She is preparing food for the journey.
12. བུམ་ པ་ འདི་ གཉིས་ ལ་ ཉི་ རིང་།
These two vases are made of lead.
13. བུ་ མོ་ འདི་ གཉིས་ མ་ ཉི་ རིང་།
These two girls are relatives.
14. མིང་ རྒྱལ་ གི་ འབྲིས་ ལ་ ཞིང་ ག་ འདུག
There are fields near the forest.
15. མོག་ བོ་ ལྷ་ པ་ དེ་ ཟོག་ བོ་ མ་ རིང་།
That Mongolian monk is not a hypocrite.
16. ཁོ་ ཟམ་ པའི་ འབྲིས་ ལ་ བསམ་ ལྷོ་ བཏང་ རས་
བཤེད་ མག
He stayed near the bridge, thinking.

*Khampa dialect

Note: The pitch of any two-syllable word is determined by the first syllable. If the first syllable is in high pitch, the low pitch of the second syllable naturally becomes high.

For example: ཚང་ ལ་ གཚང་ མ་ མ་ ཉི་

གསུང་ རོགས་ གམང་། བཤུ་ རོགས་ གམང་།

If a first syllable is in low pitch, the high pitch of the second syllable naturally becomes low. For example: དུག་ ལོག་

འདི་ གཉིས་ ཐུག་ བཤེད་ ལྷིན་ པ་ མི་ རོག་

4. Columns Three And Four

While words having column one and column two letters as their basis retain a high pitch regardless of what pre-scripted or super-scripted letter are joined to them, words having column four letters as their basis will have their usually low pitch changed to a high pitch when prefixed or superjoined with another character. Also, while words with a base letter from column one will always lack aspiration and words with a base letter from column two will always be aspirated, words with their base letter from column three will lose their usual aspiration when prefixed or superjoined characters are added to them. Column three consonants presents great difficulties for students of Tibetan. In brief, you should remember these rules:

When column three consonants have a prefix-letter or superscript, the aspiration is lost.

When column four consonants have a prefix or superscript, their usual low pitch becomes high.

a. Column Three:

Column three may be divided further into three

columns, as follows (using ག as the prototype for all column three consonants) -

3	3'	3"
ག་ forehead	དགའ་ like, love	འགའ་ some
གོ་ hear	གོ་ door	མགོ་ head
	ག་ aging	
	ག་ saddle	

Consonants from column 3' lose their aspiration, and consonants from column 3" both lose aspiration and become nasalised. In both cases low pitch is maintained. For example, while the གོ་ in གོ་སར་ (Gesar, the oral epic) is aspirated, the གོ་ in དགོ་བཤེན་ is unaspirated.

Exercise 8. Pronounce the following sentences, utilizing the correct aspiration, during the interval provided on the tape.

1. ཁོ་ གསར་ འགྱུར་ གོ་ བས་ རང་ ལ་ སྤྱིན་ མོང།
a ཅ a
After he heard the news, [he] went home.
2. ཁོས་ གོ་ བཟུབ་ ལ་ རིང།
a ཅ ཅ
He closed the door.
3. ཁོ་ མགོ་ ཆེན་ ལ་ རིང།
a ཅ
He is a fathead.

4. ཀུང་ དགའི་ རུབ་ རུག་ དཀར་ ལོ་ རིང།
ཅ ཅ ཅ ཅ ཅ

Kunga's chair is white.

5. སྐམ་ གི་ སྐང་ ལ་ སྐང་ ང་ འདུག
ཅ a ཅ ཅ a ཅ

There is an egg on the box.

Consonants from column three with the subjoined character འ may be divided phonologically into three columns:

ཌ

ཌྷ

མག

ག་

མ་ རག་ བག་

མག་ རག་

ར་

འར་

བ་

མ་

འབ་

(low, asp)

(low, unasp)

(low, unasp, nasal)

Exercise 9. Practice the following sounds.

ག་ མ་ རག་ མག་ བག་ འག་ ལྷི་ རྟི་ འབྲི་ མ་ མ་ བྲི་ རྟྱི་ རྟྱི་

Exercise 10. Listen to the word that is spoken on the tape. Select from each pair of words the word which you hear on the tape.

1.	ସ୍ୱଂ	ରସ୍ୱଂ	wheat / go
2.	ଫୁଂ	ରଫୁଂ	boat / barley
3.	ଫୁଂସ୍ୱଂ	ରଫୁଂସ୍ୱଂ	snake / journey
4.	ସ୍ୱଂ	ରସ୍ୱଂ	cut / rice
5.	ସ୍ୱଂ	ରସ୍ୱଂ	knife / ask
6.	ସ୍ୱଂ	ରସ୍ୱଂ	wrote / to be acquainted *

b. Column Four:

Column four letters are normally low in pitch and are unaspirated. This column may be divided into consonants with a nasal sound and consonants which are semi-vocalized:

4' nasal 4" semivocal

ଂ	ଂ
ଂ	ଂ
ଂ	ଂ
ଂ	ଂ

* Correct answers: 1. ସ୍ୱଂ 2. ରଫୁଂ 3. ଫୁଂସ୍ୱଂ 4. ରସ୍ୱଂ 5. ସ୍ୱଂ
6. ରସ୍ୱଂ

When any of these consonants carries a prefix or a superscript, their pitch becomes high. The lack of aspiration is maintained.

Exercise 11. Practice the variation in pitch in the following sentences.

1. ང་མངས་མོ་ལ་དགའ་བོ་ཡོད། I love sweets.
2. ངས་གཞས་རྒྱ་བོ་ཅིག་ཉམ་པ་ཡིན། I listen to a sweet song.
3. ང་གཉིད་ལྗོད་གི་འདུག ང་ཉལ་གི་ཡིན། I feel sleepy. I am going to bed.
4. ངས་བུ་གུ་བསྟལ་གི་ཡིན། I am going to put the child to bed
5. ཉིན་མ་གཉིས་རྗེས་གི་ཡིན། I will stay two days.
6. ངས་ཁོ་ཡར་བསྐྱངས་ནའི་ལང་གི་མི་འདུག Although I lifted him, he wouldn't
7. ངའི་སོ་གཅོང་མ་བཟོ་གི་ཡོད། [I] am cleaning my teeth.
8. ཇིལ་པ་གཅོན་པ་གདོང་གཞག་ཇིལ་སོང་། Jinpa went to urinate.
9. ང་རྩ་ལྔ་གི་ཡིན། I will buy five drums.

Exercise 12. The Tibetan words which may be collected around the utterance "che" produce confusion for many students. Here are some words and sentences comparing various "che" sounds - aspirated, unaspirated, high and low pitch. The taped utterances proceed line by line, with the word from the first column followed by its counterpart on the same line from the second column.

je	ཇེ	lord	<u>che</u>	ཇེ	open (intransitive)
jee'	ཇེའ'	after; trace	<u>chee'</u>	ཇེའ'	a residence far from one's homeland
jee'	བཇེད'	forgot	<u>chee'</u>	བྱེད'	do

Exercise 13. Pronounce these sentences in the interval provided on the tape.

1. ཇེའ' ལ་ བྱེད' གི་ ཡིན།
 \emptyset a [I] will do it afterwards.
2. བན་ ཚུན་ བཇེའ' ར།
 \emptyset If it is interchangeable...

3. བདག་གཞན་མཉམ་བཞི་བྱེད་དགོས།
 ཅ a Put yourself in some one else's situat
4. ཇ་ཚས་ལས་ཀ་རདི་ཇེས་ལ་བྱེད་གི་ཡིན།
 ཅ a We will do this work later.
5. ལྷོབ་སྤྱོད་གི་ཇེས་ལ་ཁ་རོལ་བྱེད་གི་ཡིན།
 ཅ a [I] will pray after studying.
6. དག་པོད་ཀད་སྤྱོད་བདར་བྱེད་མཁུ་
 ཅ a I have forgotten to practice spoken
 བཟིད་ཤག་
 ཅ Tibetan.

5. Spelling Drills:

One can hear spellings accurately only when one's ear has gained some ability to recognize aspiration and pitch. Occasionally, students of Tibetan ask Tibetan speakers to spell the words they are using; however, Western students frequently find it difficult to follow Tibetan speakers when they spell words. Success at this requires much practice, and the drills in this section provide a healthy start.

Exercise 14 (slow). Write the correct spelling of these words. Do not look at the words until you have tried to spell all of them.

1. ལྲུང་	snake	13. བརྗེད་ བཀ	forgot
2. དྲུག་	six	14. ག་ འདྲས་	how
3. ག་ཟླིགས་	see (hon.)	15. ཉི་ ཆར་	recently
4. བཞེལ་	to boil	16. ཞུང་ ཆ་	talk
5. གྲང་ མོ་	cold	17. སང་ དགོང་	tomorrow night
6. བཟོས་	made	18. བཟླ་ དབྱང་	exam
7. ལྟུང་	story	19. འབྲས་ བུ་	result, fruit
8. ཞིང་	heart	20. མགྲོན་ ཁང་	guesthouse
9. ཅང་ དེ་	completely	21. ཐུག་ ཁང་	post office
10. ལྟས་	asked (hon.)	22. གྲངས་ ཀ་ བརྒྱབ་	to count
11. བརྒྱངས་	stretched	23. གཅིག་ བྱུར་	unified
12. བཞོགས་	read (past)	24. མི་ ཁྱང་	window

Exercise 15 (medium).

བདེ་ བ་ འདོད་ ཀྱང་ ག་གི་ རླུག་ བས།

Although you desire happiness,
because of ignorance

རང་ མི་ བདེ་ བ་ དགྲ་ ལྷན་ བཅོམས།

you destroy your happiness like
an enemy.

ལྟག་ བཟུང་ འདོད་ འདོད་ སེམས་ ཡོད་ ཀྱང་ །

You have the mind to cast off
suffering,

ལྟག་ བཟུང་ ཉིད་ ལ་ མངོན་ བར་ ཞེན།

but there is extraordinary
attachment to suffering itself.

Exercise 16 (fast). The "Eight Verses Mental Training"
is spelled. Please spell out each verse as it is dictated
without referring to the text.

༡༡། ༡ བདག་མི་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ།

ཡིད་བཞིན་འོད་གུ་ལས་རྣམ་པར་གྱི།

དོན་མཚན་རྒྱུ་བའི་བསམ་བཤེས་ཡིས།

རྣམ་ཏུ་གཅིས་པར་འཛིན་པར་ཤོག།

༢ གང་དུ་སུ་དང་འགྲོགས་པའི་ཚེ།

བདག་ཉིད་ཀུན་ལས་དམན་བཅུ་ཞིང་།

གཞན་ལ་བསམ་བཤེས་པ་ཐག་པ་ཡིས།

མཚན་ཏུ་གཅིས་པར་འཛིན་པར་ཤོག།

༣ ལྷོང་ལམ་ཀུན་ཏུ་རང་རྒྱུད་ལ།

རྣམ་ཅིང་ཉོན་མོངས་སྐྱི་མ་ཐག།

བདག་གཞན་མ་རུངས་བྱེད་པས་ན།

བཅའ་ཐབས་གདོང་ནས་བརྗོད་པར་ཤོག།

༤ རང་བཞིན་ངན་པའི་སེམས་ཅན་མི།

རྣམ་ཏུ་དུག་དུག་ལོས་འོད་མཚོང་ཚོ།

རིན་ཚེན་གཏེར་དང་འཕྲུང་བ་བཞིན།

རྗེད་པར་དཀའ་བས་གཅིས་འཛིན་ཤོག།

༥ བདག་ལ་གཞན་གྱིས་དུག་དུག་པོ།

གཤེ་སྐར་ལ་སྐྱེས་མི་རིགས་བའི།

གློང་ཁ་རང་གིས་ལེན་བཤེས་དང་།

རྒྱལ་ཁ་གཞན་ལ་འབྲུལ་བར་ཤོག།

༦ གང་ལ་བདག་གིས་ཤན་བཏགས་

རེ་བ་ཚེ་བ་གང་ཞིག་གིས།

ཤིན་ཏུ་མི་རིགས་གཞན་བྱེད་ནང་

བཤེས་གཉེན་དམ་བར་བཅུ་བར་

༧ མདོར་ན་དེས་དང་བརྒྱུད་བཤེས་ཡི།

ཤན་བདེ་མ་རྣམས་ཀུན་ལ་འབྲུལ་

མ་ཡི་གཞན་དང་རྣམ་བཤེས་ཀུན་

གསང་བས་བདག་ལ་ལེན་པར་ཤོག།

༨ དེ་དག་ཀུན་ཀྱང་ཚས་བརྒྱུད་ཀྱི།

རྣམ་པའི་དྲི་མས་མ་ཐགས་ཤིང་

ཚས་ཀུན་ལྷོ་མར་ཤེས་པའི་ལྷོས།

ལེན་མིང་འཛིང་བ་ལས་ལྷོ་ཤོག།

The Eight Verse Mental Training
composed by Langri Thanpa Dorje Senge

With a mind intent on the highest goal,
More precious than the wish-fulfilling gem
May I cherish all sentient beings.

Wherever and with whomever I might be
When in the company of others
May I regard myself lower than anyone else.
Regarding all other beings as supreme.

Examining the scheme of mind in all activities
Whenever destructive thoughts arise.
May I put them down by forceful means.
For they bring harm to me and others as well.

Whenever I see a miserable being
One beset by the fear and pain of suffering
May I regard him as a precious jewel.

May I endure the unjust suffering imposed by others
Such as the scorn and abuse of envy
And may I offer them all my gains.

Those in whom I placed great hope of being aided
Who should treat me unjustly or even with harm
May I regard as great spiritual teachers.

In short, both directly and indirectly through others
May I offer aid and happiness to all mother-like beings
And may I silently endure all their pain and suffering.

May all these practices not be tainted
By impure thoughts of worldly temptations
Through a mind which sees these temptations as useless
May I escape the realm of suffering.

6. Numbers

Many Western students of Tibetan are unnecessarily sluggish when it comes to developing a facility for counting in Tibetan. It is only a matter of mental exercise. Two exercises in Tibetan numeracy are included here.

Exercise 17. Perform the following additions in Tibetan. Pronounce the correct answer during the interval provided on the tape. Try not to refer to the text.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) $6 + 2 = 8$ | (11) $128 + 41 = 169$ |
| (2) $7 + 4 = 11$ | (12) $241 + 78 = 319$ |
| (3) $14 + 21 = 35$ | (13) $506 + 123 = 763$ |
| (4) $11 + 30 = 41$ | (14) $451 + 312 = 763$ |
| (5) $6 + 49 = 54$ | (15) $637 + 423 = 1100$ |
| (6) $32 + 29 = 61$ | (16) $892 + 144 = 1006$ |
| (7) $18 + 24 = 42$ | (17) $1240 + 68 = 1308$ |
| (8) $67 + 29 = 96$ | (18) $1765 + 221 = 1986$ |
| (9) $86 + 19 = 105$ | (19) $2056 + 1211 = 3267$ |
| (10) $154 + 26 = 180$ | (20) $1987 + 2002 = 3989$ |

Exercise 18. Perform the following multiplications in Tibetan, giving the correct answer during the interval provided on the tape.

(1) $4 \times 6 = 24$

(2) $8 \times 5 = 40$

(3) $9 \times 7 = 63$

(4) $6 \times 6 = 36$

(5) $5 \times 3 = 15$

(6) $9 \times 8 = 72$

(7) $12 \times 2 = 24$

(8) $15 \times 5 = 75$

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