

Path to Enlightenment



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A deeply symbolic thangka, the texts from which this illustration are taken require a long period of deep study to fully understand. In brief, this is the interpretation of the various symbols:

1. The Path--the way to complete control of one's mind, each bend represents one of the six powers: hearing, contemplation, mindfulness, alertness, effort, and familiarity.
2. The Elephant - consciousness
3. The Monkey - mental agitation
4. The Rabbit - Fluctuations of the mind
5. The Stick to control the elephant - alertness
6. The Rope in the monk's hand - mindfulness

The five objects, or causes of mental agitation are

1. The Silk Scarf - touch
2. Peaches - taste
3. Water in a conch - scent
4. Cymbals - sound
5. A Mirror - form

The fires represent the struggle for control which is reduced through familiarity. After the final stage (in the cave), bliss and ecstasy are reached--using the realization of the wisdom of emptiness to banish ignorance