

Songs of Spiritual Experience
Condensed Points of the Stages of the Path
Tsongkhapa (1357-1419)

1

Your body is created from a billion perfect factors of goodness;
Your speech satisfies the yearnings of countless sentient beings;
Your mind perceives all objects of knowledge exactly as they are -
I bow my head to you O chief of the Shakya clan.

2

You're the most excellent sons of such peerless teacher;
You carry the burden of the enlightened activities of all conquerors,
And in countless realms you engage in ecstatic display of emanations -
I pay homage to you O Maitreya and Manjushri.

3

So difficult to fathom is the mother of all conquerors,
You who unravel its contents as it is are the jewels of the world;
You're hailed with great fame in all three spheres of the world -
I pay homage to you O Nagarjuna and Asanga.

4

Stemming from these two great charioteers with excellence
Are the two paths of the profound view and the vast conduct;
You're the custodian of the treasury of instructions
encompassing all essential points of these paths without error,
I pay homage to you O Dipamkara.

5

You are the eyes to see all the myriad collections of scriptures;
To the fortunate ones traveling to freedom
you illuminate the excellent path,
You do this through skilful deeds stirred forth by compassion.
I pay respectful homage to you O all my spiritual mentors.

6

You're the crowning jewels among all the learned ones of this world;
Your banners of fame flutter vibrantly
amongst the sentient beings; O Nagarjuna and Asanga
from you flows in an excellent steady stream
This [instruction on the] stages of the path to enlightenment.

7

Since it fulfils all the wishes of beings without exception,
It is the king of kings among all quintessential instructions;
Since it gathers into it thousands of excellent rivers of treatises,
It's as well the ocean of most glorious well-uttered insights.

8

It helps to recognize all teachings to be free of contradictions;

It helps the dawning of all scriptures as pith instructions;
It helps to find easily the enlightened intention of the conquerors; It helps also to guard against the abyss of grave negative deeds.

9

Therefore this most excellent instruction that is sought after
By numerous fortunate ones like the learned ones
of India and Tibet, This [instruction of the] stages of
the path of persons of three capacities,
What intelligent person is there whose mind is not captured by it?

10

This concise instruction distilling the essence of all scriptures,
Even through reciting it or listening to it only once,
The benefits of teaching the dharma, listening to it, and so on,
Since such waves of merit are bound to be gathered contemplate its meaning.

11

Then, the root of creating well the auspicious conditions
For all the excellences of this and future lives
Is to rely properly with effort both in thought and action
Upon the sublime spiritual mentor who reveals the path.

12

Seeing this we should never forsake him even at the cost of life
And please him with the offering of implementing his words.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

13

This life of leisure is even more precious
than a wish-granting jewel;
That I have found such an existence is only this once;
So hard to find yet like a flash of lightning it is easy to vanish;
Contemplating this situation
it's vital to realize that all mundane pursuits

14

Are like the empty grain husks floating in the winds
And that we must extract the essence of human existence.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

15

There is no certainty that after death
we may not be born in the lower realms;
The protection from such terror lies in the Three Jewels alone;
So we must make firm the practice of going for refuge
And ensure that its precepts are never undermined.

16

This in turn depends on contemplating well
the white and black karma and their effects,

and on perfect observance of the ethical norms.

I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;

You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

17

Until we've obtained the most qualified form to pursue the excellent path
we will fail to make great strides in our journey,

So we must strive in all the conditions without exception of such a form;

Thus these three doors of ours so sullied with evil karma and downfalls,

18

Since it is especially essential to purify their karmic defilements,

We must ensure to cherish the constant application all four powers.

I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;

You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

19

If we do not strive in contemplating the defects of the truth of suffering,
the genuine aspiration for liberation does not arise in us;

If we do not contemplate the causal process of the origin of suffering,
we will fail to understand how to cut the root of cyclic existence.

20

So it's vital to seek true renunciation of disenchantment with existence and
to recognize which factors chain us in the cycle of existence.

I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;

You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

21

Generating the mind is the central axle of the supreme vehicle path;

It's the foundation and the support of all expansive deeds;

To all instances of two accumulations it is like the elixir of gold;

It's the treasury of merits containing myriad collections of virtues;

22

Recognizing these truths the heroic bodhisattvas

Uphold the precious supreme mind as the heart of their practice.

I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;

You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

23

Giving is the wish-granting jewel

that satisfies the wishes of all beings;

It's the best weapon to cut the constricting knots of miserliness;

It's an undaunted deed of the bodhisattva giving birth to courage;

It's the basis to proclaim one's fame throughout all ten directions;

24

Knowing this the learned ones seek the excellent path

Of giving away entirely their body, wealth and virtues.

I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;

You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

25

Morality is the water that washes off the stains of ill deeds;
It's the cooling moonlight dispelling
the burning agony of afflictions;
In the midst of people it is most majestic like the Mt Meru;

26

It draws together all beings without any display of force;
Knowing this the sublime ones guard as if they would their eyes,
The perfect disciplines which they have chosen to adopt.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

27

Forbearance is the supreme ornament for those who have power;
It's the greatest fortitude against the agonies of afflictions;
Against its enemy the snake of hate
it is a garuda cruising in the sky;
Against the weapon of harsh words it's the strongest armor;

28

Knowing this we should habituate ourselves with
The armor of excellent forbearance by all possible means.
I, a yogi, have practice in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

29

If the armor of unflinching perseverance is worn,
Knowledge of scripture and realization increases like waxing moon;
All conducts become fused with good purpose;
And whatever initiatives we may begin succeeds as hoped for;

30

Knowing this the bodhisattvas apply great waves of effort,
Which help to dispel all forms of laziness.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

31

Concentration is the king that reigns over the mind;
When left it is as unwavering as the king of mountains;
When set forth it engages with all objects of virtue;
It induces the great bliss of a serviceable body and mind;

32

Knowing this the great-accomplished yogis
Constantly apply meditations destroying the enemy of distraction.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

33

Wisdom is the eye that sees the profound suchness;
It's the path eradicating cyclic existence from its very root;
It's a treasury of higher qualities that are praised in all scriptures;

It's known as the supreme lamp dispelling
the darkness of delusion;

34

Knowing this the learned ones who aspire for liberation
Endeavor with multiple efforts to cultivate this path.

I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;

You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

35

In a mere one-pointed concentration I fail to see

The potency to cut the root of cyclic existence;

Yet with wisdom devoid of the path of tranquil abiding,

No matter how much one may probe,

the afflictions will not be overcome.

36

So this wisdom decisively penetrating the true mode of being,

The learned ones saddle it astride the horse of unwavering calm abiding;

And with the sharp weapon of reasoning of the Middle Way free of extremes,

They dismantle all locus of objectification of the mind grasping at extremes;

37

With such expansive wisdom that probes with precision,

The learned ones enhance the wisdom realizing the suchness.

I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;

You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

38

What need is there say that through one-pointed cultivation Absorption is realized?

Through discriminative awareness

Probing with precision as well one can abide unwavering

And utterly stable upon the true mode of being.

39

Wondrous are those who see this

And strive for the union of abiding and insight.

I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;

You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

40

The space-like emptiness of meditative equipoise,

And the illusion-like emptiness of the subsequent realizations,

Praised are those who cultivate them and bind together

The method and wisdom and travel beyond the bodhisattva deeds.

41

It's the way of the fortunate ones

To realize this and not to be content with partial paths;

I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;

You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

42

Thus having cultivated as they are the common paths

Essential for the two supreme paths of causal and resultant great vehicles,

I have entered the great ocean of tantras
By relying upon the leadership of the learned navigators;

43

And through application of the quintessential instructions,
I have made meaningful human existence that I have obtained.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

44

In order to make familiar to my own mind,
And to help benefit fortunate others as well,
I've explained here in words easy to understand
In its entirety the path that pleases the conquerors.

45

“Through this virtue may all beings be never divorced
From the perfectly pure excellent path” thus I pray;
I, a yogi, have made aspirations in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should pray likewise.

This brief presentation of the practices of the stages of the path to enlightenment written in the format of a memorandum was composed by the well-read monk, the renunciate Lobsang Drakpa at the great mountain retreat of Geden Nampar Gyalwai Ling.