

# Songs of Spiritual Experiences

By Lama Tsong Khapa



1. I prostrate before you, (Buddha), head of the Shakya clan. Your enlightened body is born out of tens of millions of positive virtues and perfect accomplishments; your enlightened speech grants the wishes of limitless beings; your enlightened mind sees all knowables as they are.
2. I prostrate before you Maitreya and Manjushri, supreme spiritual children of this peerless teacher. Assuming responsibility (to further) all Buddha's enlightened deeds, you sport emanations to countless worlds.
3. I prostrate before your feet, Nagarjuna and Asanga, ornaments of our Southern Continent. Highly famed throughout the three realms, you have commented on the most difficult to fathom "Mother of the Buddhas" (*Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*) according to exactly what was intended.
4. I bow to Dipamkara (Atisha), holder of a treasure of instructions (as seen in your *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*). All the complete, unmistakable points concerning the

paths of profound view and vast action, transmitted intact from these two great forerunners, can be included within it.

5. Respectfully, I prostrate before my spiritual masters. You are the eyes allowing us to behold all the infinite scriptural pronouncements, the best ford for those of good fortune to cross to liberation. You make everything clear through your skillful deeds, which are moved by intense loving concern.
6. The stages of the path to enlightenment have been transmitted intact by those who have followed in order both from Nagarjuna and Asanga, those crowning jewels of all erudite masters of our Southern Continent and the banner of whose fame stands out above the masses. As (following these stages) can fulfill every desirable aim of all nine kinds of being, they are a power-granting king of precious instruction. Because they collect the streams of thousands of excellent classics, they are indeed an ocean of illustrious, correct explanation.
7. These teachings make it easy to understand how there is nothing contradictory in all the Buddha's teachings and make every scriptural pronouncement without exception dawn on your mind as a personal instruction. They make it easy to discover what the Buddha intended and protect you as well from the abyss of the great error. Because of these (four benefits), what discriminating person among the erudite masters of India and Tibet would not have his or her mind be completely enraptured by these stages of the path (arranged) according to the three levels of motivation, the supreme instruction to which many fortunate ones have devoted themselves?
8. Although (there is much merit to be gained from) reciting or hearing even once this manner of text (written by Atisha) that includes the essential points of all scriptural pronouncements, you are certain to amass even greater waves of beneficial collections from actually teaching and studying the sacred Dharma (contained therein). Therefore, you should consider the points (for doing this properly).
9. (Having taken refuge,) you should see that the root cause excellently propitious for as great a mass of good fortune as possible for this and future lives is proper devotion in thought and action to your sublime teacher who shows you the path (to enlightenment). Thus you should please your teacher by offering your practice of exactly what he or she says, which you would not forsake even at the cost of your life. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

10. This human existence with its (eight) liberties is much more precious than a wish-granting jewel. Obtained just this once, difficult to acquire and easily lost, (it passes in a flash) like lightning in the sky. Considering how (easily this can happen at any time) and realizing that all worldly activities are as (immaterial as) chaff, you must try to extract its essence at all times, day and night. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.
11. After death, there is no guarantee that you will not be reborn in one of the three unfortunate realms. Nevertheless, it is certain that the Three Jewels of Refuge have the power to protect you from their terrors. For this reason, your taking of refuge should be extremely solid and you should follow its advice without ever letting (your commitments) weaken. Moreover, (your success in) so doing depends on your considering thoroughly which are the black or the white karmic actions together with their results and then living according to the guides of what is to be adopted or rejected. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.
12. The fullest strides (of progress) in actualizing the supreme paths will not come about unless you have attained the working basis (of an ideal human body) that is complete with (all eight ripened favorable) qualities. Therefore, you must train in the causal (virtuous actions) that will preclude (your attainment of such a form) from being incomplete. (Furthermore) as it is extremely essential to cleanse away the stains of black karmic debts and downfalls (from broken vows) tarnishing the three gateways (of your body, speech and mind), and especially (to remove) your karmic obstacles (which would prevent such a rebirth), you should cherish continually devoting yourself to (applying) the complete set of four opponent powers (which can purge you of them). I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.
13. If you do not make an effort to think about true sufferings and their drawbacks, you will not properly develop a keen interest to work for liberation. If you do not consider the stages whereby (true) origins of all suffering place and keep you in cyclic existence, you will not know the means for cutting the root of this vicious circle. Therefore, you should cherish exuding total disgust and renunciation of such existence by knowing which factors bind you to its wheel. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.
14. Ever-enhancing your enlightened motive of bodhicitta is the central axle of the Mahayana path. It is the basis and foundation for great waves of (enlightening) conduct.

Like a gold-making elixir, (it turns) everything (you do) into the two collections, (building up) a treasure of merit gathered from infinitely collected virtues. Knowing this, bodhisattvas hold this supreme precious mind as their innermost practice. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

15. Generosity is the wish-granting jewel with which you can fulfill the hopes of sentient beings. It is the best weapon for cutting the knot of miserliness. It is the (altruistic) conduct that enhances your selfconfidence and undaunted courage. It is the basis for your good reputation to be proclaimed in the ten directions. Knowing this, the wise have devoted themselves to the excellent path of completely giving away their body, belongings and merit. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

16. Ethical discipline is the water that washes away the stains of faulty actions. It is the ray of moonlight that cools the scorching heat of the defilements. (It makes you) radiant like a Mount Meru in the midst of the nine kinds of being. By its power, you are able to bend all beings (to your good influence) without (recourse to) mesmerizing glares. Knowing this, the holy ones have safeguarded, as they would their eyes, the precepts that they have accepted (to keep) purely. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

17. Patience is the best adornment for those with power and the perfect ascetic practice for those tormented by delusions. It is the high-soaring eagle as the enemy of the snake of anger, and the thickest armor against the weapons of abusive language. Knowing this, (the wise) have accustomed themselves in various ways and forms to the armor of supreme patience. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

18. Once you wear the armor of resolute and irreversible joyous effort, your expertise in the scriptures and insights will increase like the waxing moon. You will make all your actions meaningful (for attaining enlightenment) and will bring whatever you undertake to its intended conclusion. Knowing this, the bodhisattvas have exerted great waves of joyous effort, washing away all laziness. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

19. [Meditative concentration / *Định* ] is the king wielding power over the mind. If you fix it (on one point), it remains there, immovable like a mighty Mount Meru. If you apply it, it can engage fully with any virtuous object. It leads to the great exhilarating bliss of

your body and mind being made serviceable. Knowing this, yogis who are proficient have devoted themselves continuously to [single-pointed concentration chi??], which overcomes the enemy of mental wandering. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

20. Profound wisdom is the eye with which to behold profound emptiness and the path by which to uproot (fundamental ignorance), the source of cyclic existence. It is the treasure of genius praised in all the scriptural pronouncements and is renowned as the supreme lamp that eliminates the darkness of closed-mindedness. Knowing this, the wise who have wished for liberation have advanced themselves along this path with every effort. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.
21. In (a state of ) merely single-pointed meditative concentration, you do not have the insight (that gives you) the ability to cut the root of cyclic existence. Moreover, devoid of a path of calm abiding, wisdom (by itself) cannot turn back the delusions, no matter how much you analyze them. Therefore, on the horse of unwavering calm abiding, (masters) have mounted the discriminating wisdom that is totally decisive about how things exist [or, the wisdom penetrating the depths of the ultimate mode of being]. Then, with the sharp weapon of Middle Path reasoning, devoid of extremes, they have used wide-ranging discriminating wisdom to analyze properly and destroy all underlying supports for their (cognitions) aimed at grasping for extremes. In this way, they have expanded their intelligence that has realized emptiness. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.
22. Once you have achieved single-pointed concentration through accustoming yourself to single-pointedness of mind, your examination then of individual phenomena with the proper analysis should itself enhance your single-minded concentration settled extremely firmly, without any wavering, on the actual way in which all things exist. Seeing this, the zealous have marveled at the attainment of the union of calm abiding and penetrative insight. Is there need to mention that you should pray (to attain it as well)? I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.
23. (Having achieved such a union) you should meditate both on space-like emptiness while completely absorbed (in your meditation sessions) and on illusion-like emptiness when you subsequently arise. By doing this, you will, through your union of method and awareness, become praised as someone perfecting the bodhisattva's conduct. Realizing this, those with the great good fortune (to have attained enlightenment) have made it

their custom never to be content with merely partial paths. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

24. ( Renunciation, an enlightened motive and correct view of emptiness) are necessary in common for (achieving) supreme paths through either of the two Mahayana vehicles of (practicing) causes (for enlightenment) or (simulating now) the results (you will achieve ). Therefore, once you have properly developed like this these (three principal) paths, you should rely on the skillful captain (of a fully qualified tantric master) as your protector, and set out (on this latter, speedier vehicle) across the vast ocean of the (four) classes of tantra.

Those who have (*done so* and) devoted themselves to his or her guideline instructions have made their attainment of (*a human body with all*) liberties and endowments fully meaningful (*by attaining enlightenment in their very lives*). I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

25. In order to accustom this to my own mind and also to benefit others as well who have the good fortune (*to meet a true guru and be able to practice what he or she teaches*), I have explained here in easily understandable words the complete path that pleases the buddhas. I pray that the merit from this may cause all sentient beings never to be parted from these pure and excellent paths. I, the yogi, have practiced just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

## **COLOPHON**

This concludes the *Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path to Enlightenment*, compiled in brief so that they might not be forgotten. It has been written at Ganden Nampar Gyelwa'i Monastery on Drog Riwoche Mountain, Tibet, by the Buddhist monk Losang Dragpa, a meditator who has heard many teachings.

[Extract from *Illuminating the Path*, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, published by Thubten Dhargye Ling Archive, Long Beach, California]