

## A Hymn of Experience

*Lam rim nyam gur*

I bow my head to you, foremost of the Shakyas,  
Whose body is formed by ten million perfections, virtues,  
and excellence;  
Whose speech fulfills the hopes of infinite transmigratory beings;  
Whose mind perceives all objects of knowledge.

I prostrate to Manjushri and Maitreya,  
Whose emanations sport in innumerable universes.  
Assuming the responsibility of all the conquerors' conduct,  
You are the supreme sons of the peerless teacher.

I prostrate at the feet of Nagarjuna and Asanga,  
Ornaments of Jambudvipa  
Renowned throughout the three levels,  
Who composed commentaries, in accordance with the intention,  
On the Mother of the Conquerors so hard to fathom.

I bow to Dipamkara Atisha, holder of the treasury of instructions  
That gathers together the important points, completely  
and unmistakably,  
Of the paths of profound view and vast conduct,  
The excellent lineages descending from the two great charioteers.

I prostrate respectfully to the spiritual teachers,  
Eyes that see all the infinite scriptures,  
Who with skillful means moved by compassion  
Clarify the supreme entryway for the fortunate traveling  
to liberation.

The stages of the path to enlightenment  
Are the excellent lineage handed down from Nagarjuna and Asanga,  
Crown ornaments of the wise of Jambudvipa  
And banners of fame resplendent among transmigratory beings.

This instruction, the king of powerful jewels,  
Fulfills all the desired aims of the nine types of beings;  
It is an ocean of glorious and excellent explanations  
Gathering the rivers of a thousand fine scriptures.

Through it, you can realize that all the teachings are  
without contradiction,  
Understand all the scriptures as an instruction,  
Easily find the intention of the Conqueror,  
And be protected from the abyss of very faulty conduct.

Therefore, this supreme instruction is relied on by many  
fortunate ones,  
The wise beings of India and Tibet.  
What analytical person would not be captivated  
By the stages of the path of the three types of beings?

Contemplate the meaning of this method  
That gathers the essence of all the scriptures;  
Even teaching or hearing a single session definitely gathers  
great waves  
Of the assembled benefits of explaining or listening  
to the holy Dharma.

Rely, correctly and with effort, in thought and action  
On the holy spiritual friend, the teacher of the path  
And the foundation perfectly bringing auspiciousness  
For all the excellent collections of this and future lives.  
Having seen this, do not give him up even at the cost of your life,

And please them with the offering of practicing just as they instruct.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

This body of leisure, more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel,  
Is found but once. Though difficult to obtain again,  
It finishes as quickly as lightning in the sky.  
Having reflected in this way, realizing that all worldly activities  
Are like winnowed chaff,  
You must take its essence day and night.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

Although there is no certainty that after death  
You will not be reborn in the bad migrations,  
The Three Rare Sublime Ones will definitely protect you from this fear,  
Therefore, steadfastly take refuge in them  
And never degenerate their precepts.  
In addition, think well about the results of black and white actions,  
And depend on the correct practice of that to be adopted  
and that to be rejected.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

Until you attain a body with pure characteristics,  
You will not make progress in your practice of the supreme path;  
Train in the causes for becoming free from those impurities.  
Since your three doors are defiled by negative actions, downfalls,  
and stains,  
It is particularly important to purify karmic obscurations;  
Therefore, continuously cherish reliance on purification  
with the four forces.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

If you do not put effort into contemplating true sufferings—  
the faults of samsara—  
You will not develop the wish for liberation.  
If you do not contemplate true origins—the steps for entering  
samsara—  
You will not understand how to cut the roots of samsara.  
Therefore, rely on weariness, definite emergence from samsara;  
And cherish the knowledge of what binds you to samsara.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

The generation of the mind is the central post of the Mahayana path,  
The base and support of great waves of conduct,  
A philosopher's stone transforming all into the two collections,  
A treasure of merit gathering infinite virtue.  
Having understood this, the heroic children of the conquerors  
Maintain deeply the pledges of the precious supreme mind.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

Generosity is a wish-fulfilling jewel satisfying the hopes  
of transmigratory beings,  
The supreme weapon cutting the knot of miserliness,  
The activity of the children of the conquerors that strengthens  
courage without dismay,  
And the basis of being renowned in the ten directions.  
Having understood this, the wise rely on the excellent path  
Of giving away their bodies, possessions, and virtue.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

Morality is water cleansing the stains of faulty behavior;  
Moonlight dispelling the hot torment of the afflictions.  
As splendid as Mount Meru in the midst of the nine types of beings,

It gathers all transmigratory beings with no threat of force.  
Having understood this, holy beings guard morality correctly taken  
As they do their eyes.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

Patience is the finest ornament of the powerful,  
The supreme of all hardships counteracting the torment  
of the afflictions,  
A garuda against the enemy, the snake of hatred,  
And thick armor against the weapon of harsh speech.  
Having understood this, cultivate the armor  
Of supreme patience in many ways.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

When you don armor-like effort steady and immovable,  
The qualities of scripture and realization will increase like  
the waxing moon,  
All your behavior becomes meaningful,  
And whatever actions are undertaken will be accomplished as desired.  
Having understood this, the conquerors' children put forth  
Billowing waves of effort dispelling all laziness.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

Concentration is a king ruling the mind:  
When placed, it is as immovable as Mount Meru;  
When sent forth, it engages all virtuous objects.  
It induces the great bliss of a serviceable body and mind.  
Having understood this, the lords of yogis rely continuously  
On the meditative stabilization that destroys the enemy, distraction.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

Wisdom is an eye seeing profound thusness,  
The path eradicating the root of existence,  
A treasury of qualities praised in all the scriptures,  
And renowned as the supreme of lamps dispelling the darkness  
of ignorance.

Having understood this, the wise who desire liberation  
Generate the path with much effort.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

One-pointed concentration alone  
Is not considered to be able to cut the roots of samsara.  
Wisdom separated from the path of calm abiding  
Will not avert the afflictions no matter how much you analyze.  
Having mounted the wisdom that reflects on the real mode  
of existence  
Upon the horse of steadfast calm abiding,  
With the sharp weapon of the logic of the middle way free  
of extremes  
Destroy all mental fabrications grasping at extremes.  
With vast wisdom analyzing in this way,  
Increase the wisdom that realizes thusness.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

The meditative stabilization achieved by one-pointed meditation  
Is not enough; with the individual investigation of proper analysis,  
Generate the meditative stabilization that abides firm  
and immovable on the mode of existence.  
Having seen this, understand how wonderful are those  
who endeavor  
To accomplish the union of calm abiding and special insight.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

In meditative equipoise, emptiness is like space;  
In post-meditation, emptiness is like an illusion;  
Through meditation on both, method and wisdom are unified,  
Whereby, the perfect conduct of the conquerors' children is praised.  
Having realized this, the tradition of those of good fortune  
Is not satisfied by either path alone.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

Having generated the common path necessary for  
The two supreme Mahayana paths, the causal and resultant,  
Rely on a protector, a skillful master,  
And enter the great ocean of the classes of tantra.  
Then through reliance on complete and perfect instructions,  
Make the attainment of your pleasures and endowments meaningful.  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

Due to the virtue from explaining in clear words  
The perfect complete path pleasing to the conquerors  
So as to familiarize my mind with it  
And to benefit others of good fortune,  
I made the prayer, "May all transmigratory beings  
Never be parted from the excellent pure path."  
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.  
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

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Lama Zopa Rinpoche explained that although Lama Tsongkhapa wrote, "I, a yogi, practiced like this. You who desire liberation, should do likewise," we disciples should recite, "You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way. I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way." (Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore, 2019)

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Notes:

1. Here, “black” and “white” are being used metaphorically for “negative karma” and “positive karma.”
2. Stanza 8a is not part of Lama Tsongkhapa’s original text, but has been added here following Pabongkha Rinpoche’s outline.

Colophons:

*The Foundation of All Good Qualities (yon tan gzhir gyur ma)*, composed by Lama Tsongkhapa. Excerpted from the *Jorcho* booklet. Translated by Maureen O’Malley and edited by Ven. Ailsa Cameron (Wisdom Publications, 1988). Lightly edited by Ven. Constance Miller and Nick Ribush, April 1999. Small corrections made by Ven. Steve Carlier and Ven. Joan Nicell, FPMT Education Services, 2018. Revised by Lama Zopa Rinpoche and edited by Ven. Joan Nicell, Ven. Ailsa Cameron, and Ven. Tenzin Tsomo, FPMT Education Services, July 2020.

*The Three Principal Aspects of the Path (lam gyi gtso bo rnam gsum gyi rtsa ba; lam gtso rnam gsum):*

*Original Colophon:*

These teachings by the virtue beggar [gelong] Lozang Dragpa, who had extensive listening, were composed as advice for the nephew of Ponpo Ngawang Dragpa.

*Translator’s Colophon:*

Translated into English by the beggar of food and sleep named Lama Zopa, with the editorial assistance of the devoted Jonathan Landaw, in November, 2006 at Kachoe Dechen Ling, Aptos, California. This translation was undertaken with the intention of producing an English version that would include all the words contained in the original Tibetan, a number of which were omitted from some translations previously available. It is hoped that the present work will enable more people to receive benefit from Lama Tsongkhapa’s precious teachings.

*Publisher’s Colophon:*

Verses 11 and 12 were revised by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Kopan Monastery in late 2006, and input by Gyaltan Mindrol, FPMT Education Services, February 2007.

*Translator’s Dedication:*

From the merits collected by doing this work, transmitting Lama Tsongkhapa’s pure teaching—the heart of the 84,000 teachings of Buddha—into a western language, in a way as close as possible to the words and the meaning of the root text, may this be most beneficial for all sentient beings, bringing kind mother sentient beings—whose lives are lost, under the control of karma and delusion, totally enveloped in the darkness of ignorance—to the achievement of enlightenment as quickly as possible.



May anyone who merely sees this text, reads this text, teaches this text, hears about this text, or keeps this text thereby actualize indestructible guru devotion, seeing the Guru as Buddha, and train well in the three common principal aspects of the path, actualize the two stages, and achieve the unified state of Vajradhara as soon as possible. May he or she especially generate loving kindness, the compassionate thought, and bodhichitta, and immediately become a source of peace and happiness for all sentient beings, especially in this world. And may all war, famine, disease, sickness, epidemics, torture, poverty, and the dangers of fire, water, wind, and earthquakes immediately cease so that no one will experience any of these undesirable circumstances ever again. May the pure teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa flourish continuously and spread in all directions.

*A Hymn of Experience (lam rim nyams mgur):*

*Original Colophon:*

This brief presentation of the practice of the stages of the path to enlightenment, made in the form of a note, was composed by glorious Lozang Dragpa, a fully ordained monk who had done much listening, at Genden Nampar Gyelwe Monastery on Solitary Mountain.

*Translator's Colophon:*

Translated by Ven. Joan Nicell, Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Pomaia, Italy, 1998. 1998. Edited by Ven. Joan Nicell, December 2019.