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སྟོན།

**Banquet of Liberation:
An Aspiration Prayer on the Stages of the
Mahāyāna Path**

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

theg pa chen po'i lam gi rim pa'i smon lam rnam grol dga' ston

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INTRODUCTION

This meaningful aspiration prayer by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo covers the main elements of the full Mahāyāna path in a series of pithy verses structured as a series of classic four-line stanzas.

The aspiration prayer begins with a devotional homage to the lama. Then come the foundational aspects of the path: the freedoms and advantages of a precious human birth, renunciation, the vows of individual liberation, and the Four Noble Truths. The aspiration moves on to the specifically Mahāyāna concerns of repaying all beings' kindness, love, compassion, and the altruistic motivation of bodhicitta. From there, the six pāramitās are each described with a verse, using rich metaphors such as a jeweled cloud, a garden, and an ocean. These stanzas could be considered the central core of the text, as the pāramitās are foundational to the Mahāyāna approach of skillful means and wisdom. After that follow verses about making offerings to noble beings and maintaining their teachings.

With poetic references to the Vajrayāna path, Khyentse Wangpo expounds on receiving empowerment from the lama, upholding yogic discipline, and the levels of realization, such as the unified stage of the path of training and the ultimate fruition of the path of no-more-learning. The text concludes with a few stanzas of final auspicious aspirations, praying for the ten virtues and a new celebration of the Golden Age.

རྣམ་གྲོལ་དགའ་སྟོན།

Banquet of Liberation

*Namo gurubhyah!*¹

Inseparable from glorious Vajrasattva,
The single condensation of the kāyas and wisdoms of all the conquerors pervading
space,
Presiding master, lama of great kindness, I supplicate you from the bottom of my
heart.
Please grant your blessings!

In this and all future births, may I and others
Attain the supreme freedoms and advantages, engage with unmistaken teachings,
Be accepted by qualified spiritual guides,
And bring study, reflection, and meditation to perfection.

With a nectar garland of utterly pure renunciation,
Having nurtured the lotus of the vows of individual liberation
And by fully completing the beautiful path of the four truths,
May all the torments of cyclic existence be extinguished.

Understanding all beings pervading space to be my mothers
And remembering their tenderness,
In order to repay that kindness so they acquire all forms of happiness and
freedoms from suffering,
May I train in the altruistic attitude, the unified mind of love and compassion.

Relying on that, for the sake of others
Striving for unsurpassable complete awakening, [246]
May I uphold the supreme bodhicitta of aspiration and application
So far not experienced even in dreams.

In order to set beings on the path of temporary and ultimate wellbeing,
May I be fearless in the face of turmoil,
And may a fertile rain of jewels—everything desirable—always fall
From the great, generous cloud of the sublime Dharma.

With the white lotus of refraining from all unwholesome deeds,
The sweet fragrance of gathering virtue,
And the blooming splendor of the anther of benefiting beings,
May the delightful garden of integrity flourish.

Pacifying in basic space any anger triggered by objects,
Meeting hardships on the path with exceptional tolerance,
And having the power of fearless confidence toward the profound meaning,
May I emulate the youthful Mañjuśrī in my training.

May the armorlike diligence of my motivation be stable,
And may I be undistracted from the bodhisattva's conduct of actual application.
Not giving in to weariness,
May I apply myself to benefiting beings until cyclic existence comes to an end.

With pliable body and mind, abiding in happiness in this life
And mastering discerning wisdom,
May I enter the ocean of stable samādhi,
Which renders evident the suchness of the noble path.

First, through study may I gain a general understanding of the underlying nature
of things,
Then, through reflection may I cut through misconceptions about the provisional
and definitive truths,
And finally, through meditation may profound wisdom illumination [247]
Blossom as the unity of the two truths.

May I outshine the lower paths through skillful means,
Not giving up on saṃsāra due to the power of compassion,
And by perfecting an ocean of aspirations,
Reach the other shore, the culmination of sublime wisdom.

May all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of all times and directions
Be pleased by marvelous clouds of offerings,
And may I always serve the assembly
Of all who uphold their sublime Dharma.

In that way, may I achieve great benefit for beings,
Completely ripen them and engage with all the worlds,
Fully purify all realms, enter the Mahāyāna path,
And, making all activity meaningful, accomplish the Great Vehicle.

The particular feature of the unsurpassable Vajrayāna
Is to join us with the eminent unified level in one lifetime.
Through the presiding master, who is skilled in teaching that just as it is,
May my three doors be ripened by the utterly pure four empowerments.

For the time being, by perfecting the qualities of the ten outer and inner powers
Of the four enlightened activities and eight great accomplishments,
And through joining by means of the three kinds of conduct of yogic discipline,
May I swiftly attain the unified stage of the path of training.

Ultimately, the vajra dance of unity of the path of no-more-learning
Relies on the proximate cause of mudrās.
With unlimited kāyas, wisdoms, and enlightened activities,
May I accomplish boundless benefit for myself and others.

Furthermore, may the teachings of knowledge and practice [248] spread and grow.
May the lotus feet of the holders of the teachings remain steadfast for a hundred
eons.

And may beings, through the conduct of the ten virtues,
Enjoy a new celebration of the Golden Age.

Thus, whenever through my altruistic intentions
I make one-pointed aspirations,
May they always be accomplished swiftly, without obstacle,
And with auspicious signs!

On the eighth day of the tenth month, at the time of modestly showing veneration by means of a cloud of offerings before the Mahābodhi statue² on the lower story of the central temple of glorious Samye, great Akaniṣṭha, this poetic aspiration prayer arose from uncontrived and firm devotion. It was composed by the wandering vagabond Tsuglak Mawe Nyima.

*Sarvadā maṅgalaṃ.*³

NOTES

1. “Homage to the gurus!”
2. This refers to the great stone Mahābodhi statue (Jowo Changchub Chenpo) of Śākyamuni Buddha at Samye.
3. “May all be virtuous!”

GLOSSARY

actual application

སྟོན་བ། • *sbyor ba*

The second of three types of the pāramitā of diligence.

Akaniṣṭha

འོག་མིན། • *'og min*

The name Akaniṣṭha, used to denote the highest pure land in the form realm, is also associated with the Samye (bsam yas) complex in Central Tibet, which was consecrated by Padmasambhava (cf. 'og min mkha' 'gro'i tshogs khangs).

armorlike diligence

གོ་ཆའི་བརྩོན་འགྲུས། • *go cha'i brtson 'grus*

A quality of perseverance that is like donning armor against potential obstacles.

basic space

དབྱིངས། • *dbyings* • dhātu

The empty aspect of phenomena and mind. Sometimes translated as “expanse” or “openness.”

eight great accomplishments

ཐུབ་ཆེན་བརྒྱད། • *grub chen brgyad*

A classic list of eight common siddhis or accomplishments.

general understanding

དོན་སྟོན། • *don spyi*

Sometimes translated literally as “object-universal,” this signifies a generalized approximation, a mental image, or a conceptual notion, as opposed to a specific and direct perception.

Golden Age

འཇིག་རྟེན་རྫོགས་ལྔ་ན། • *'jig rten na rdzogs ldan*

A metaphor for glorious times based on the Indian model of four ages, with the Golden Age, or “Age of Truth” (*satyayuga*), being the first.

joining

མཆོས་སྤྱོད། • *mtshams sbyar*

An enhancement of the view (*lta ba*) brought forth by the three kinds of conduct.

Mahābodhi statue

། •

The great stone Mahābodhi statue (Jowo Changchub Chenpo) of Śākyamuni Buddha in the Samye temple is also referenced in the biography of Jigme Lingpa.

misconception

སྒྲོ་འདོགས། • *sgro 'dogs*

Often translated as “exaggeration” or “superimposition,” it indicates overestimating the qualities of something. It is part of a pair that includes the opposite, “denial” or “underappreciation.”

presiding master

ཁྱབ་བདག ། • *khyab bdag*

An epithet of the Buddha often applied to lamas, indicating a lord-like quality of presiding over all maṇḍalas.

proximate cause of mudrā

ཕྱག་རྒྱའི་ཉེ་རྒྱ། • *phyag rgya'i nye rgyu*

An indication of either kamamudrā or mahamudrā.

renders evident

མངོན་གྱུར་པ། • *mngon gyur pa*

Bringing forth, manifesting, or actualizing a quality that is already present but hidden or dormant.

ten outer and inner powers

ཕྱི་ནང་དབང་བརྒྱ། • *phyi nang dbang bcu*

Ten powers of a bodhisattva.

three kinds of conduct

སྤྱོད་པ་གསུམ། • *spyod pa gsum*

Three kinds of conduct according to Anuyoga: consecration or blessing (*bying gyis rlob*), overpowering (*dbang bsgyur*), and skillful means (*thabs kyi spyod pa*).

Tsuglak Mawe Nyima

གཙུག་ལག་སྐུ་བའི་ཉི་མ། • *gtsug lag smra ba'i nyi ma*

Literally, “Sun of the Speech of the Sacred Doctrine.” An alternate name used by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

unified level

ཟུང་འཇུག་གོ་འཕལ་། • *zung 'jug go 'phang*

A state of accomplishment in which the enlightened bodied and wisdoms are in union.

unified stage of the path of training

སྟོབ་པའི་ཟུང་འཇུག་། • *slob pa'i zung 'jug*

A high level of accomplishment, equal to the vidyādhara level of mahāmudrā.

vajra dance of unity

རྫོ་རྗེའི་གར། • *rdo rje'i gar*

A poetic metaphor for completing the path.

wandering vagabond

རྒྱལ་ཁམས་ཀྱི་དྲི་དྲཱ། • *rgyal khams kyi dA ri drA* • *dāridrā*

Literally, “vagrant of the realm” (cf. *dāridrya*, “poverty”).