



The Three Principal *Paths*

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**THE THREE PRINCIPAL PATHS
BY JE TSONGKAPA**

I bow to all the high and holy lamas.

As far as I am able I'll explain
The essence of all high teachings of the Victors,
The path that all their holy sons commend,
The entry point for the fortunate seeking freedom.

Listen with a pure mind, fortunate ones
Who have no craving for the pleasures of life,
And who to make leisure and fortune meaningful strive
To turn their minds to the path which pleases the Victors.

There's no way to end, without pure renunciation,
This striving for pleasant results in the ocean of life.
It's because of their hankering life as well that beings
Are fettered, so seek renunciation first.

Leisure and fortune are hard to find, life's not long;
Think it constantly, stop desire for this life.
Think over and over how deeds and their fruits never fail,
And the cycle's suffering: stop desire for the future.

When you've meditated thus and feel not even
A moment's wish for the good things of cyclic life,
And when you begin to think both night and day
Of achieving freedom, you've found renunciation.

Renunciation though can never bring
The total bliss of matchless Buddhahood
Unless it's bound by the purest wish; and so,
The wise seek the high wish for enlightenment.

They're swept along on four fierce river currents,
Chained up tight in past deeds, hard to undo,
Stuffed in a steel cage of grasping "self,"
Smothered in the pitch-black ignorance.

In a limitless round they're born, and in their births
Are tortured by three sufferings without a break;
Think how your mothers feel, think of what's happening
To them: try to develop this highest wish.

You may master renunciation and the wish,
But unless you have the wisdom perceiving reality
You cannot cut the root of cyclic life.
Make efforts in ways then to perceive interdependence.

A person's entered the path that pleases the Buddhas
When for all objects, in the cycle or beyond,
He sees that cause and effect can never fail,
And when for him they lose all solid appearance.

You've yet to realize the thought of the Able
As long as two ideas seem to you disparate:
The appearance of things – infallible interdependence;
And emptiness – beyond taking any position.

At some point they no longer alternate, come together;
Just seeing that interdependence never fails
Brings realization that destroys how you hold to objects,
And then your analysis with view is complete.

In addition, the appearance prevents the existence extreme;
Emptiness that of non-existence, and if
You see how emptiness shows in cause and effect
You'll never be stolen off by extreme views.

When you've grasped as well as I the essential points
Of each of the three principal paths explained,
Then go into isolation, my son, make mighty
Efforts, and quickly win your ultimate wish.