



## What is the Path of Liberation?

The Path of Liberation is an experiential path of meditation for those who wish to practice the Buddhist teachings under the guidance of Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche. Encompassing the most important practices of the Kagyu and Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, and building on the foundational teachings of the Joy of Living, the Path of Liberation presents a series of meditation techniques designed to strip away the causes of suffering and uncover the radiant awareness that underlies all experience.

There are two tracks in the Path of Liberation. Each track is designed for a different set of circumstances. The first track is based on a short practice liturgy entitled *Nectar of the Path* and is designed for people who have roughly 30–60 minutes for their daily meditation practice. The second track is based on a traditional liturgy for the preliminary practices (Tibetan: *ngondro*) entitled *The Chariot for Traveling the Noble Path*. This track works best for those who can practice between one and two hours each day. Both tracks culminate in the practice of a White Tara Sadhana.

### ***What practices are included in the Path of Liberation?***

The Path of Liberation includes two different forms of practice: nature of mind practices and practices that involve contemplation and/or the imagination. Nature of mind practices put us directly in touch with our awakened nature — the radiant purity of awareness. Contemplations and practices that use the imagination bring us to the same place, but they do so by dissolving the habits that keep us from seeing our awakened nature.

### ***How are the two tracks of the Path of Liberation different?***

The main difference between the *Nectar of the Path* and preliminary practices tracks was mentioned above. The former works best for those who have 30–60 minutes to practice each day, or who want a simpler form of practice with more time to devote specifically to nature of mind meditation, while the latter is designed for those who have at least one to two hours for their daily meditation practice.

The two tracks contain many of the same elements. They both include the four thoughts — four contemplations that turn the mind toward the path of awakening — as well as the practices of

going for refuge, arousing the altruistic mindset of bodhichitta, and guru yoga. The preliminary practices track also includes the practices of Vajrasattva and mandala offering.

*Nectar of the Path* is a much shorter practice liturgy, and therefore daily practice involves less chanting and more time for contemplation or nature of mind meditation. The preliminary practices are more time intensive, and therefore leave less room for periods devoted specifically to nature of mind practice, although it is still strongly recommended that nature of mind meditation be included in every meditation session and/or joined with the prostrations etc. In terms of the total amount of practice time needed to complete each path, the preliminary practice track takes considerably longer (see below for more detail).

Finally, completion of either track will enable students to receive advanced nature of mind teachings, but only the preliminary practice track will authorize students to practice the Vajrayogini Sadhana and the Six Yogas of Naropa.

### ***How long will it take to complete the requirements for each of the two tracks?***

The total time commitment for the *Nectar of the Path* track is 500 hours. The preliminary practices track requires 100 hours of contemplation, and 111,111 repetitions of each of the four main preliminary practices. Although it depends on the individual, this path takes roughly 2,000 to 2,500 hours of practice to complete. Thus, the first track could be completed in roughly three years with thirty minutes of daily practice, while the second track would take roughly five years with one and a half hours of daily practice.

### ***How do I receive Path of Liberation teachings?***

Unlike the Joy of Living levels, which are presented in a series of weekend workshops and online courses, the Path of Liberation is largely a path that you will follow at your own pace once you receive the teachings and transmissions to begin practicing. Introductory teachings are given at Path of Liberation retreats, such as our annual Exploring the Nature of Mind summer and winter retreats. Any Path of Liberation retreat will include the empowerments and teachings necessary to begin practicing this path. Once you receive these initial teachings, you can continue to attend Path of Liberation teachings to deepen your practice. Once you have completed a certain amount of practice in one of the two tracks, you can attend advanced nature of mind retreats offered by Mingyur Rinpoche and other Tergar lamas. Courses in Tergar's Vajrayana Online program, especially the Ngondro Immersion and Nectar of the Path Immersion, are available to those who would like more support and guidance for their practice.

### ***What if I am not sure which track to choose?***

The Senior Tergar Instructors are always available if you need guidance on choosing a practice. If you are not sure which track to choose, you can start with *Nectar of the Path* and switch to the preliminary practices later on. If you'd like to make a connection with the preliminary practices but are not ready to commit to the entire path, you can begin by contemplating the four thoughts and bodhichitta for one hundred hours, and completing 11,111 repetitions of each preliminary practice. The most important point is to choose the option that works with your circumstances. You can always adjust later on and receive guidance from a Tergar Lama or Instructor.

### ***How do I progress through the five Path of Liberation levels?***

Both tracks include five levels. *Nectar of the Path* meditators practice each part of the practice for 100 hours before moving on to the next stage. The same is true of the preliminary practices, except that with some practices the commitment is to complete a certain number of repetitions rather than hours of practice.

Guides are available that provide details about the specific requirements for each level. Once you have completed the number of hours/repetitions and retreat days specified for that level, you can move on to the next stage of the path. The following is an overview of the five levels for each track.

## **Nectar of the Path Track**

### **Level 1: The four thoughts + stillness, movement, and awareness**

- 100 hours of total practice
- Four days of retreat (with 6+ hours of practice per day)

### **Level 2: Refuge + perception and the nature of mind**

- 100 hours of total practice
- Four days of retreat (with 6+ hours of practice per day)

### **Level 3: Bodhichitta + emptiness and the nature of mind**

- 100 hours of total practice
- Seven days of retreat (with 6+ hours of practice per day)

### **Level 4: Guru yoga + clarity and the nature of mind**

- 100 hours of total practice
- Seven days of retreat (with 6+ hours of practice per day)

### **Level 5: White Tara + self-liberation and the nature of mind**

- 100 hours of total practice
- Seven days of retreat (with 6+ hours of practice per day)

## Preliminary Practices Track

### Level 1: The four thoughts, refuge, and bodhichitta

- 50 hours of contemplating the four thoughts
- 50 hours of contemplating bodhichitta
- 27,777 prostrations<sup>1</sup>
- Four days of retreat (with 6+ hours of ngondro practice per day)

### Level 2: Vajrasattva and the 100-syllable mantra

- 111,111 repetitions of the 100-syllable mantra
- 27,777 prostrations
- Four days of retreat (with 6+ hours of ngondro practice per day)

### Level 3: Mandala offering

- 111,111 mandala offerings
- 27,777 prostrations
- Seven days of retreat (with 6+ hours of ngondro practice per day)

### Level 4: Guru yoga

- 111,111 repetitions of the seven-line guru yoga supplication
- 27,780 prostrations
- Seven days of retreat (with 6+ hours of ngondro practice per day)

### Level 5: White Tara

- 1,000,000 repetitions of the White Tara mantra
- Seven days of retreat (with 6+ hours of White Tara practice per day)

### Advanced Training

Meditators who have completed either track may wish to deepen their practice and continue training. Upon completion of either track, Tergar students are eligible to attend advanced nature of mind retreats and courses. These retreats may cover important transmissions and teachings in the Mahamudra and Dzogchen traditions, such as *The Ocean of Definitive Meaning* and *Yeshe Lama*. Those who have completed the preliminary practices are also eligible to practice the Vajrayogini Sadhana followed by the Six Yogas of Naropa. This option is not available to those in the *Nectar of the Path* track.

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<sup>1</sup> For those who prefer, the entire accumulation of 111,111 prostrations may be practiced before moving on to Vajrasattva practice.