

A Daily Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha



By Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, Inc.
1632 SE 11th Avenue
Portland, OR 97214 USA
www.fpmt.org

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Cover image of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha—artist unknown. Line drawing of Shakyamuni Buddha © Robert Beer. Used with permission.

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Practice Requirements:

Anyone can do this practice. No prerequisites are necessary.

Preface

Life is very busy, especially for people living in the West. Many people say, therefore, that it is difficult to find the time during a busy day for a regular meditation practice. In this case, the best solution is to get up earlier each morning. Getting up early is a good habit to develop; it follows the example of all the practitioners who have attained the path. And because it is very quiet, early morning is also a good time to meditate.

In this way, you will be able to do your practice. If you put off your practice until the very end of the day, you might forget it completely, because you are distracted by television or something else or because you are too tired, especially if you have children. The best time to find peace and quiet for practice is generally after the children have gone to bed or before they wake up in the morning and demand your attention.

Many people reject rituals because they do not understand the purpose and meaning of ritual. Done correctly, the following practices are not mere ritual: they are meditation. Without meditation, ritual becomes like a hollow orange, with skin on the outside but empty inside.

Each of these preliminary practices contains the entire path to enlightenment. If you understand the meaning behind them, the rituals taught by Buddha are actually not separate from the entire path to enlightenment. Of course, you need purification and a large collection of merit to be able to have faith in and to understand this.

While this meditation is based on Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, it can be adapted to suit other practices by altering the visualization and the mantra recitation.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Taiwan, March 1992

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How to Meditate on the Graduated Path to Enlightenment

The Preliminaries

Motivation

Set up an altar in front of your meditation seat with as many offerings as you can of the best possible quality. Bless each offering you put on the altar by reciting OM ĀḤ HŪṢ. Seated comfortably on your meditation seat, contemplate:

How extremely lucky I am that I have not died yet. I am especially lucky that my death didn't happen last night. How wonderful and fortunate it is that today I am still a human being, a state that is extremely rare.

But this is not all. I have a perfect human body, which is also extremely rare. I have met the virtuous friend, who reveals the unmistakable, complete path to enlightenment and is extremely difficult to meet; and I have met the Buddhadharma, which is also extremely difficult to meet.

Since I have met all of these extraordinarily fortunate circumstances, I should not waste my life in any way. I should make my life as useful as possible for the infinite other sentient beings.

Their peace and happiness depend upon me, and my happiness is received only from their kindness. The greater use of my life to other sentient beings the more it becomes the means to achieve success and happiness for myself.

The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from suffering and its causes—negative karmas and disturbing thoughts—and to lead them not only to the ultimate happiness of self-liberation (freedom merely from the sufferings of samsara), but to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment as well. This is my responsibility.

I am responsible for the happiness of all sentient beings. Why? Because whether my actions are helpful or harmful to them depends completely on my own mind, on whether I have compassion or not. By generating compassion, I immediately benefit numberless other sentient beings. At the very least, I do not harm them.

The ultimate purpose of my life is to do perfect work for others. In order to fulfill that purpose, it is necessary for me to achieve the state of full enlightenment, omniscient mind, and in order to do that, I must actualize the path to enlightenment. Therefore, I am going to do actions that become only causes for me to achieve enlightenment and to bring all sentient beings to enlightenment as quickly as possible.¹

May all my actions become only causes for me to achieve enlightenment and to bring all sentient beings to enlightenment as quickly as possible.

Taking Refuge in the Gurus

The Guru is Buddha. The Guru is Dharma.
The Guru is also Sangha.
The Guru is the creator of all [happiness].
In all the gurus, I take refuge. (3x)

Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhichitta

Recite these two verses three times.

With the thought desiring to liberate transmigratory beings,
I always take refuge
In the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha
Until the heart of enlightenment is achieved.

With perseverance, acting with
Wisdom, compassion, and loving kindness,
In front of the buddhas, for the benefit of sentient beings,
I generate the thought of full enlightenment.

Purifying the Place

Everywhere may the ground be pure,
Free of pebbles and so forth,
As level as the palm of the hand,
In the nature of sapphire, and soft.

Invocation

Savior of all sentient beings without exception,
Divine destroyer of the unbearable hordes of maras
and their forces,
Perfect knower of all things without exception,
Bhagavan, together with your retinue, please come here.

Blessing, Multiplying, and Presenting the Offerings

Offering Prayer

May divine and human offerings,
Both actually arranged and mentally emanated,
Become clouds of the finest Samantabhadra offerings,
Filling the entire realm of space.

Offering Cloud Mantra

By reciting this mantra, the offerings are blessed, multiplied to become numberless, and offered.

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VAJRA SĀRA PRAMARDANE /
TATHĀGATĀYA / ARHATE SAMYAK SAṂBUDDHĀYA /
TADYATHĀ / OM VAJRA VAJRE / MAHĀ VAJRE / MAHĀ TEJA
VAJRE / MAHĀ VIDYĀ VAJRE / MAHĀ BODHICHITTA VAJRE /
MAHĀ BODHI MAṆḌOPA SAṂKRAMAṆA VAJRE / SARVA
KARMĀVARAṆA VIŚHODHANA VAJRE SVĀHĀ (3x)

Extensive Power of Truth

With this verse, the offerings that you have visualized as numberless actually appear to the buddhas and bodhisattvas and are received.

By the power of truth of the Three Rare Sublime Ones,
The blessings of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas,
The great wealth of the completed two types of merits,
And the pure and inconceivable sphere of phenomena,
May these piles of clouds of offerings arising through
transformation by the bodhisattvas Arya Samantabhadra,
Manjushri, and so forth—unimaginable and inexhaustible,
equaling the sky—arise and, in the presence of the buddhas
and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, be received.

Prostrations with the Mantra and Holy Name

Stand up and prostrate three times while reciting the following mantra, which multiplies each prostration a thousand times. It also enables you to actualize the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness in this lifetime, and prevents disease and harm from spirits and human beings.

The physical action of prostrating mainly purifies negative karmas of the body. The verbal action of reciting the mantra, which praises the buddhas' supreme power and knowledge, purifies negative karmas of the speech. The mental action of remembering the supreme power and knowledge of the buddhas, which arouses faith, purifies negative karmas of the mind.

OM NAMO MAÑJUŚHRĪYE / NAMA SŪŚHRĪYE /
NAMA UTTAMAŚHRĪYE SVĀHĀ (3x)

Prostrate three times while reciting Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy name. According to the Kangyur, each recitation purifies eight hundred billion eons of negative karmas.

LA MA TÖN PA CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA
YANG DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ PÄL GYÄL WA SHA KYA THUB
PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO / CHHÖ DO KYAB SU CHHI O / JIN GYI LAB
TU SÖL (3x)

**To Guru, Teacher, Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly
Complete Buddha, Glorious Conqueror Shakyamuni,
I prostrate, make offerings, and go for refuge.
Please grant me your blessings. (3x)**

You can sit down.



The Actual Practice

Refuge Visualization

At the level of my forehead about two meters in front of me is a large golden throne. It is beautifully adorned with jewels and supported at each corner by a pair of snow lions.² On the throne is a fully blossomed lotus,³ and on that are sun and moon disks.⁴

Upon the lotus, sun, and moon sits Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who has achieved perfect cessation of all suffering and obscurations and has attained all perfect realizations. He is the manifestation of the omniscient mind of all the buddhas, the ultimate guru. He is inseparable from my root guru, who shows me the unmistakable path and is bound by infinite compassion to me and all sentient beings.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body, in the nature of golden light, is very magnificent. He wears the three saffron robes of a monk. His face is beautiful and has a loving smile; his compassionate eyes look toward me but simultaneously encompass all sentient beings. His eyes are long, narrow, and fine; his gaze is very peaceful. His eyes are half-closed,⁵ half-open.⁶

His lips are red.⁷ His hair is blue-black; each hair individually curls to the right. On the crown of his head is a pinnacle. The palm of his right hand rests on his right knee, the middle finger touching the moon cushion.⁸ His left hand rests in his lap in the mudra of meditation,⁹ holding an alms bowl filled with nectar.¹⁰ He is seated in the vajra posture¹¹ in the center of an aura of light, like sunbeams.¹²

Each feature of his holy body represents an aspect of his omniscient mind—his inner realizations—and also demonstrates the

causes, the merits collected in the past. No matter how much one looks at Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, one never feels satiated.

The supreme refuge, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, encompasses Guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. From his holy body, beams are emitted in all ten directions; numberless manifestations of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha are transformed on the tips of these beams to ripen the infinite sentient beings.

Looking at me with compassionate eyes, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha says, “Son of the lineage,¹³ if you want to be liberated from the suffering of samsara, I will guide you.” He happily promises this and also promises to free me from the breathless state of the lower realms.

Refuge Motivation

Around you are seated the infinite father and mother sentient beings. They are completely intoxicated with the unimaginable infinite sufferings of each of the six realms. They are wide eyed, desperately looking for refuge, pitifully calling out. Think:

Circling continuously in samsara’s six realms, I have been tormented by suffering from beginningless rebirths until now and still I haven’t become liberated from it.

Fortunately, this time I have received a perfect human body. Because of my good fortune I have met the most sublime teaching, the Buddhadharma, revealed by the Teacher, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha.

I have no certainty that I will not die today. My death could happen even today. If I were to die today, I would have no freedom to choose the realm in which I am reborn. I could fall down the precipice into one of the realms of evil-gone transmigratory beings. I should think carefully about whether I would be able to bear those sufferings for even one second.

Even if I were to achieve the body of a deva or human, which is extremely unlikely, I would still be ceaselessly tormented by many hundreds of sufferings, such as birth, sickness, old age, and death, dissatisfaction, anxiety, relationship problems, and so forth. And after that, I would again fall down into the lower realms. There is nothing to trust about being in the upper realms.

This one time I have obtained a perfect human body with freedoms and richnesses, am being guided by the sublime virtuous friend who reveals the path, and have the wisdom to discriminate between the shortcomings of samsara and the benefits of liberation. Therefore, I should quickly achieve liberation from this terrifying samsara.

Yet to liberate only myself from samsara is not sufficient; this is not the meaning of my life. Numberless sentient beings equaling the limitless sky are wandering in the suffering states of samsara, and they have all been my mothers and have been kind to me. Therefore, I must liberate them and lead them to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

Who is the refuge and guide who liberates from the great ocean of beginningless samsara? There is none other than the Three Rare Sublime Ones: the Teacher, the fully enlightened one; the Dharma, the scriptures and realizations; and the Sangha, the supreme assembly. Therefore, together, I and each and every one of the transmigratory beings equaling the sky take refuge in the Guru-Three Rare Sublime Ones.

Refuge Prayers

Recite each refuge prayer three times or any number of times you wish, in English or Sanskrit, while doing the visualizations for purifying negative karmas and increasing qualities.¹⁴ Think that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is pleased because you are relying on Guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Taking Refuge in the Guru

Purifying Negative Karmas

While taking refuge in the Guru, visualize that five-color beams of light, with white the strongest, are emitted from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. These beams enter your body and the bodies of all sentient beings, purifying in particular the negative karmas and obscurations collected from beginningless rebirths in relation to gurus, such as by harming their holy bodies, disregarding their advice, disturbing their holy minds, generating nondevotional thoughts about them, belittling them, criticizing them, and so forth. All these negative karmas and obscurations leave through your lower orifices, sense organs, and pores as liquid smoke or coal. You and all sentient beings are completely purified.

NAMO GURUBHYAḤ

I take refuge in the Guru.

Increasing Qualities

While continuing to take refuge in the Guru, visualize that five-color beams of light, with yellow the strongest, are emitted from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. The beams, in essence the qualities of the Guru's holy body, holy speech, and holy mind, enter you and all sentient beings, causing your life spans, merits, and qualities of scriptural understanding and realization to increase. In particular, you and all sentient beings receive the blessings of the Guru's holy body, holy speech, and holy mind.

NAMO GURUBHYAḤ

I take refuge in the Guru.

Coming under the Guidance

At the end of the recitation, think that you and all sentient beings have completely come under the guidance of the Guru.

Taking Refuge in the Buddha

Purifying Negative Karmas

While taking refuge in the Buddha, visualize that five-color beams of light, with white the strongest, are emitted from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. These beams enter your body and the bodies of all sentient beings, purifying in particular the negative karmas and obscurations collected from beginningless rebirths in relation to buddhas, such as by causing a buddha to bleed;¹⁵ discriminating statues of buddhas as good or bad;¹⁶ using statues as collateral; selling statues while viewing them as ordinary material things; and destroying holy objects, such as statues and stupas, motivated by anger or another delusion. All these negative karmas and obscurations come out through your lower orifices, sense organs, and pores as liquid smoke or coal. You and all sentient beings are completely purified.

NAMO BUDDHĀYA

I take refuge in the Buddha.

Increasing Qualities

While continuing to take refuge in the Buddha, visualize that five-color beams of light, with yellow the strongest, are emitted from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. The beams, in essence the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, the eighteen unmixed qualities, and so forth, enter you and all sentient beings, causing you to receive the qualities of a buddha.

NAMO BUDDHĀYA

I take refuge in the Buddha.

Coming under the Guidance

At the end of the recitation, think that you and all sentient beings have completely come under the guidance of the Buddha.

Taking Refuge in the Dharma

Purifying Negative Karmas

While taking refuge in the Dharma, visualize that five-color beams of light, with white the strongest, are emitted from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. These beams enter your body and the bodies of all sentient beings, purifying in particular the negative karmas and obscurations collected from beginningless rebirths in relation to Dharma, such as by abandoning the holy Dharma, disrespecting Buddha's scriptures, selling scriptures, and using the money from selling scriptures for your own enjoyment.¹⁷

The extremely heavy negative karma of abandoning the holy Dharma is created very easily by, for example, criticizing the Lesser Vehicle because you are a follower of the Great Vehicle or criticizing the Great Vehicle because you are a follower of the Lesser Vehicle. It also includes followers of sutra criticizing tantra and followers of tantra criticizing sutra; criticizing any of the four classes of tantra; and criticizing any of the four Tibetan traditions (Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug) because of holding to your own tradition.

Disrespecting Buddha's scriptures, which can be done either mentally or physically, includes walking over them, using them to clean things, throwing them in the garbage, putting Dharma texts directly on the bare ground, seats, and beds; using the plaque from between your teeth to stick bits of paper on pages of scriptures; licking your fingers to turn pages; and putting material objects, such as glasses and rosaries, on top of texts.

All these negative karmas and obscurations come out through your lower orifices, sense organs, and pores as liquid smoke or coal. You and all sentient beings are completely purified.

NAMO DHARMĀYA

I take refuge in the Dharma.

Increasing Qualities

While continuing to take refuge in the Dharma, visualize that five-color beams of light, with yellow the strongest, are emitted

from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. The beams enter you and all sentient beings, causing you to actualize the Dharma: the true cessation of suffering and the true path, the ultimate wisdom directly realizing emptiness only.

NAMO DHARMĀYA

I take refuge in the Dharma.

Coming under the Guidance

At the end of the recitation, think that you and all sentient beings have completely come under the guidance of the Dharma.

Taking Refuge in the Sangha

Purifying Negative Karmas

While taking refuge in the Sangha, visualize that five-color beams of light, with white the strongest, are emitted from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. These beams enter your body and the bodies of all sentient beings, purifying in particular the negative karmas and obscurations collected from beginningless rebirths in relation to the Sangha, such as by causing disunity among the sangha;¹⁸ stealing things offered by benefactors with devotion to the sangha;¹⁹ criticizing the sangha, such as by likening them to animals, for example, saying, “You’re eating like a dog,” or “You’re jumping like a monkey”;²⁰ and failing to keep a commitment to offer tormas to the Dharma protectors.

All these negative karmas and obscurations come out through your lower orifices, sense organs, and pores as liquid smoke or coal. You and all sentient beings are completely purified.

NAMO SAṄGHĀYA

I take refuge in the Sangha.

Increasing Qualities

While continuing to take refuge in the Sangha, visualize that five-color beams of light, with yellow the strongest, are emitted

from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. The beams enter you and all sentient beings, causing you to receive the realizations of the sangha. From the bodhisattvas, you receive bodhichitta and the six paramitas; from the hearer-listeners and solitary realizers, you receive the three higher trainings and the twelve pure qualities of the state of no-more-learning; from the dakas and dakinis, you receive the transcendental wisdom of nondual bliss and emptiness; and from the Dharma protectors, you receive the four actions of pacification, increase, control, and wrath.

NAMO SAṄGHĀYA

I take refuge in the Sangha.

Coming under the Guidance

At the end of the recitation, think that you and all sentient beings have completely come under the guidance of the Sangha.

Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhichitta

I take refuge until I am enlightened

In the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.

By my merits of generosity and so forth,

May I become a buddha to benefit transmigratory beings. (3x)

Four Immeasurables

Contemplate the four immeasurables as a support for generating bodhichitta.

Immeasurable Equanimity

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to
abide in equanimity, free from attachment and hatred,
discriminating some beings as close and others as distant.
May they abide in equanimity.

I myself will cause them to abide in equanimity.
Please, Guru-Buddha, bless me to be able to do this.

Immeasurable Loving Kindness²¹

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to
achieve buddhahood.
May they achieve buddhahood.
I myself will cause them to achieve buddhahood.
Please, Guru-Buddha, bless me to be able to do this.

Immeasurable Compassion

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free
from suffering and the causes of suffering.
May they be free from suffering and its causes.
I myself will cause them to be free from suffering and its
causes.
Please, Guru-Buddha, bless me to be able to do this.

Immeasurable Joy

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were never
separated from the happiness of higher rebirth and
liberation.
May they never be separated from these.
I myself will cause them never to be separated from these.
Please, Guru-Buddha, bless me to be able to do this.

Bodhichitta Motivation

Just as I have been suffering in samsara from beginningless time, so too have all my kind mother sentient beings, who are so precious. They are the source of all my past, present, and future happiness and have been kind to me again and again numberless times from beginningless time. Therefore, I have the responsibility to liberate all the numberless kind mother sentient beings from the unimaginable oceans of samsaric suffering and its causes. However, in my

present state, not only am I unable to liberate others, I cannot even benefit myself.

Even if I were to achieve the state of an arhat, the work for myself would still not be complete and the work for others would be limited. Therefore, in order to complete the work for myself and others, I definitely need to achieve full enlightenment, the state of buddhahood. If I achieve this sublime state of buddhahood, I will have ceased all the numberless mistakes and completed all qualities, and I will then be able to work effortlessly for all the kind mother transmigratory beings equaling the extent of space. Therefore, in order to achieve full enlightenment quickly, I am going to follow the example of the brave, extensive deeds of a bodhisattva in order to benefit others. In particular, I am going to meditate on the stages of the path to enlightenment.

By generating the four immeasurables and bodhichitta, you collect more merits than could fill the sky, thus filling your life with great happiness.

Seven-Limb Prayer

I prostrate reverently with my body, speech, and mind.

The benefits of prostration are that you cease all obscurations of body, speech, and mind and achieve the infinite qualities of the holy body, speech, and mind of all the buddhas. This limb is the specific remedy to pride.

I present clouds of every type of offering, both actually arranged and mentally emanated.

The benefit of offering is that you will have enjoyments as limitless as the sky when you become enlightened. This limb is the specific remedy to miserliness.

I confess all my negative actions and downfalls collected from beginningless time.²²

The benefit of confession is that you cease the two obscurations. This limb is the specific remedy to negative karmas and disturbing thoughts, including the three poisonous minds.

I rejoice in the virtues of ordinary beings and aryas.²³

The benefit of rejoicing is that you achieve the holy body of a buddha, which is beautiful in all ways and has no unpleasant qualities. This limb is the specific remedy to jealousy.

Please remain until the end of samsara,²⁴

The benefit of requesting the guru to remain in this world is that you achieve the holy body of a buddha. This limb is the specific remedy to the negative karmas of having disturbed the guru's holy mind and also to the karmic obscurations that prevent you from meeting a guru.

And turn the wheel of Dharma for transmigratory beings.²⁵

The benefits of requesting the guru to teach the holy Dharma are that you achieve the holy speech of a buddha, which has infinite qualities, and you will be guided in all lifetimes by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. This limb is a special inconceivable cause of meeting the holy Dharma again in the future. It is the specific remedy to ignorance and abandoning the Dharma.

I dedicate my own and others' virtues to great enlightenment.

The benefit of dedication is that a seed is planted in your mind to achieve all the qualities of a buddha. This limb is the specific remedy to heresy.

Mandala Offering

One of the best means of accumulating inconceivable extensive merits in the shortest time is by engaging in the mandala offering practice. In the very moment of offering a mandala, you collect inconceivable merits by having visualized the entire universe and all the offerings on the mandala base.²⁶

As Lama Tsongkhapa mentions, the two essential points of the mandala offering meditation are to visualize as many mandalas as possible and to visualize them as clearly as possible. Therefore, you should clearly visualize mandalas of the highest, richest quality filling the whole sky.

Short Mandala Offering

This ground, anointed with perfume, strewn with flowers,
Adorned with Mount Meru, the four continents, the sun
and the moon:

I imagine this as a buddha land and offer it.

May all transmigratory beings enjoy this pure land.

Due to the merits of offering this mandala to Guru Shakyamuni
Buddha, may I, my family members, and all sentient beings
be able to meet, practice, and actualize the teachings of
the victorious one, Lozang Dragpa,
Who lived an eminent life endowed with pure morality,
A brave heart in doing the bodhisattva's extensive deeds,
And the yoga of the two stages, the essence of which is
the transcendental wisdom of nondual bliss and emptiness.²⁷

IDAM GURU RATNA MAṆḌALAKAṆ NIRYĀTAYĀMI

Requests

Holy body created by ten million excellent virtues,
 Holy speech fulfilling the hopes of infinite transmigratory
 beings,
 Holy mind seeing all objects of knowledge just as they are:
 To the principal of the Shakyas, I make requests.

Guru Vajradhara, embodiment of all three refuges,
 Takes the form of virtuous friends to subdue beings in
 whatever way is needed,
 And grants the supreme and common realizations:
 To the kind gurus, I make requests.

Holy sublime field of merit, my perfect, pure guru,
 By making offerings and requests to you, Savior,
 Sole root of all happiness and goodness,
 Please bless me to be happily guided by you.

Magnificent and precious root guru,
 Please abide on the lotus seat on my crown,
 Guide me with your great kindness,
 And grant me the realizations of your holy body, speech,
 and mind.

The Foundation of All Good Qualities

Recite each verse slowly and at the end of the verse think that all the obstacles preventing the realization of that specific lamrim topic are purified and you generate its realization.

The foundation of all good qualities is the kind and perfect
 guru;
 Correct devotion to him is the root of the path.
 By clearly seeing this and applying great effort,
 Please bless me to rely upon him with great respect.

Understanding that the precious freedom of this rebirth is
found only once,
Is greatly meaningful, and is difficult to find again,
Please bless me to generate the mind that unceasingly,
Day and night, takes its essence.

This life is as impermanent as a water bubble;
Remember how quickly it decays and death comes.
After death, just like a shadow follows the body,
The results of black and white karma follow.

Finding firm and definite conviction in this,
Please bless me always to be careful
To abandon even the slightest negative action
And accomplish all virtuous deeds.

Seeking samsaric pleasures is the door to all suffering:
They are uncertain and cannot be relied upon.
Recognizing these shortcomings,
Please bless me to generate the strong wish for the bliss of
liberation.

Led by this pure thought,
Mindfulness, alertness, and great caution arise.
The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha vows:
Please bless me to accomplish this essential practice.

Just as I have fallen into the sea of samsara,
So have all mother transmigratory beings.
Please bless me to see this, train in supreme bodhichitta,
And bear the responsibility of freeing transmigratory beings.

Even if I develop only bodhichitta, but I don't practice
the three types of morality,
I will not achieve enlightenment.

With my clear recognition of this,
Please bless me to practice the bodhisattva vows with
great energy.

Once I have pacified distractions to wrong objects
And correctly analyzed the meaning of reality,
Please bless me to generate quickly within my mindstream
The unified path of calm abiding and special insight.

Having become a pure vessel by training in the general path,
Please bless me to enter
The holy gateway of the fortunate ones:
The supreme vajra vehicle.

At that time, the basis of accomplishing the two attainments
Is keeping pure vows and samaya.
As I have become firmly convinced of this,
Please bless me to protect these vows and pledges like my life.

Then, having realized the importance of the two stages,
The essence of the Vajrayana,
By practicing with great energy, never giving up the four
sessions,
Please bless me to realize the teachings of the holy guru.

Like that, may the gurus who show the noble path
And the spiritual friends who practice it have long lives.
Please bless me to pacify completely
All outer and inner hindrances.

In all my lives, never separated from perfect gurus,
May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma.
By completing the qualities of the grounds and paths,
May I quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.

Mantra Recitation

As you recite the mantra of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, visualize white light radiating from Buddha's heart and entering your body, speech, and mind. All diseases, spirit harms, negative karmas, and obscurations are washed out of you, like dirt being washed out of a cloth.

TADYATHĀ OM MUNE MUNE MAHĀ MUNAYE SVĀHĀ

Then, as you continue to recite the mantra, visualize yellow light radiating from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's heart and entering your body, speech, and mind. You receive all the qualities of the Buddha's holy body, holy speech, and holy mind. In particular, your mind is transformed into the perfect wisdom of Buddha's omniscient mind and you attain Buddha's perfect compassion and perfect power. You become a perfect guide, able to fulfill the wishes of all sentient beings and bring them every happiness, especially the highest happiness of enlightenment.

At the end of the mantra recitation, think that the sufferings of sentient beings are unbearable—even the problems of one sentient being are unbearable. Generate a strong determination to free every sentient being from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and their causes. Not only that, also make the determination to take upon yourself every sentient being's sufferings and problems along with their causes, karmas and delusions, and to bring them to the ultimate happiness of liberation from samsara and the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

Make the determination to live your life with a good heart, great compassion, and loving kindness for all sentient beings and to work to free them from all sufferings and their causes and bring them to full enlightenment. Think that because you have generated this thought to benefit all sentient beings and because you are making your life worthwhile, Buddha is extremely pleased with you.

The Conclusion

Absorption

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who in essence is all the buddhas, Dharma, and sangha, melts into light and absorbs into me. We become completely one: my body, speech, and mind become Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body, holy speech, and holy mind.

I arise in the aspect of Buddha and in essence I am also Buddha. At my heart is a moon disk with the mantra TADYATHĀ OM MUNE MUNE MAHĀ MUNAYE SVĀHĀ around the edge. Light beams radiate from my holy body with a buddha on the tip of each beam. A buddha comes to the crown of each of the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, asuras, suras, and intermediate state beings. White light beams descend from the buddha's holy body, purifying all their defilements. Then the buddha absorbs into each sentient being and they all become Buddha. Think, "How wonderful it is that I have enlightened all sentient beings!"

Dedications

To Actualize Bodhichitta

Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, the numberless sentient beings, and the numberless buddhas, may bodhichitta be generated in the hearts of all the sentient beings of the six realms, and especially in the hearts of everybody in this world. May it be generated in my heart and in the hearts of all my family members, those who are living and those who have died. May the bodhichitta that has already been generated increase.

For Peace and Happiness to Prevail in the World

Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, the numberless sentient beings, and the numberless buddhas, may all wars, sickness, famine, and economic problems in the world, and all dangers of earth, water, fire, and wind, be pacified immediately, and may perfect peace and happiness prevail in everyone's hearts and lives. By their generating loving kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta, may the Buddhadharma last for a long time, and may the sentient beings in this world meet the Buddhadharma and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

To be Able to Cherish All Sentient Beings

Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, the numberless sentient beings, and the numberless buddhas, may I be able to cherish every single hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human being, asura, sura, and intermediate state being more than the sky filled with dollars, diamonds, or wish-granting jewels. May I be able to free all of them from the lower realms, samsara, and the lower nirvana, and bring everyone to the peerless happiness of buddhahood.

To Achieve Enlightenment and to Seal the Merits with Emptiness

Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, the numberless sentient beings, and the numberless buddhas, which are completely empty of existing from their own side, may I, who am completely empty of existing from my own side, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which is completely empty of existing from its own side, and lead all sentient beings, who are completely empty of existing from their own side, to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which is completely empty of existing from its own side, by myself alone, who am completely empty of existing from my own side.

“Which is completely empty of existing from its own side” can be replaced by “which does not exist from its own side,” “which is totally empty,” “which is merely labeled by the mind,” “which exists in mere name,” “which is a total hallucination,” or any combination of these.

To Dedicate in the Same Way as All the Past Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

I fully dedicate all these virtues
 To be able to train just like
 The hero Manjushri, who knows reality,
 And just like Samantabhadra as well.

I fully dedicate all my roots of virtue,
 With the dedication praised as the best
 By all the gone-beyond victorious ones of the three times,
 In order to have good conduct.

Colophon

Compiled by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in Taipei, Taiwan, March 1992. Revised at Kopan Monastery, Kathmandu, Nepal, December 1995. Edited for publication at Wisdom Publications, Boston, Massachusetts, July 1996. Lightly revised and reprinted by FPMT Education Services, February 2001. Reformatted and very lightly revised by Ven. Gyalten Mindrol, FPMT Education Services, December 2005. New absorption visualization dictated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche and edited by Ven. Gyalten Mindrol, 2008 and 2010. The entire practice was revised by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Kopan Monastery, Nepal; Bodhgaya, India; and Chailsa, Nepal between December 2016 and April 2017. The changes were dictated to Ven. Ailsa Cameron, who revised the booklet, June 2017. Further editing by Ven. Joan Nicell, FPMT Education Services, and Ven. Ailsa Cameron, January 2018.

Notes

1. From the two types of motivation, the causal motivation and the motivation of the time, here the motivation of bodhichitta—the wish to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings—is causal. The causal motivation is the motivation that precedes and causes the doing of an action, whereas the motivation of the time is the motivation at the time the action is actually done. Bodhichitta is the best virtuous motivation for transforming all actions from this moment on into the path to enlightenment. It is the best cause of happiness, and it results in the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.
2. The snow lions signify Buddha's quality of the four types of fearlessness.
3. The lotus signifies Buddha's holy body and holy mind, which are unstained by the shortcomings of samsara.
4. The sun signifies wisdom (clear light) and the moon signifies method (illusory body). The two together signify the unification of no-more-learning, and Buddha sitting on them signifies his achievement of this unification. The lotus, sun, and moon also signify the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment: renunciation, bodhichitta, and right view.
5. Buddha's half-closed eyes signify that his holy mind is in meditative equipoise in space-like emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomena.
6. Buddha's half-open eyes signify that his holy mind, while in meditative equipoise on the ultimate nature, the emptiness of all phenomena, is at the same time, out of compassion, working for sentient beings equaling the extent of space, by manifesting pure and impure aspects according to the karmas of sentient beings.
7. Buddha's red lips signify that he reveals the Dharma to others out of compassion.
8. The middle finger touching the moon cushion signifies that Buddha has control over the mara, Deva's Son.
9. Buddha's left hand in the mudra of meditation signifies that he has overcome the mara of the disturbing thoughts.
10. Holding an alms bowl filled with nectar signifies that Buddha has overcome the mara of the aggregates.

11. Being seated in the vajra posture signifies that Buddha has destroyed the mara of the Lord of Death. Thus, he has destroyed his own four maras and is also destroying the maras attacking other sentient beings.
12. His aura of light signifies that Buddha works for sentient beings using whatever means will benefit them.
13. According to Lama Zopa Rinpoche: “The term ‘son’ is not used in dependence upon the characteristics of the body, but of the mind. This term is used because it is normally the son who becomes the king.
14. The source of these visualizations is *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* by Pabongka Rinpoche (Wisdom Publications, 2006, pp. 134–144).
15. Even though you have not caused a buddha to bleed in this life, you have done it in past lives.
16. Buddha’s holy body has no mistakes—it is just the craftsmanship that is bad and good.
17. In the past, when a family of benefactors of the great Chenrezig yogi Wonton Kyergangpa lost their wealth, they sold a copy of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra in a Hundred Thousand Lines*. As confession, they invited Wonton Kyergangpa and three other monks to their house to do prayers, but served them with food bought with the money obtained from selling the sutra. That night Wonton Kyergangpa experienced strong pain and saw through his clairvoyance that it was caused by a white syllable A traveling throughout his body. He prayed to Chenrezig, who came to him and said, “You people ate food bought with money from selling a scripture. For you, a yogi with thinner obscurations, the karma has ripened in this life. The other monks have heavy obscurations and have no choice but to be born in hell. As confession, you should have the *Prajnaparamita Sutra in a Hundred Thousand Lines* written in gold.” Chenrezig also told Wonton Kyergangpa to do a lot of *drultor* offerings, a specific type of torma offering to purify negative karmas created by misusing offerings to sangha. After he did that, he became free from pain.
18. Disunity can be created among the arya sangha, those who have a direct perception of emptiness, and among the ordinary sangha, four fully ordained monks or nuns keeping pure vows.
19. The Tibetan term *kor* (Tib. *dkor*) means to misuse monastic property or donations made out of faith, which pollutes the mind. If you don’t study or practice well but live on offerings given to you with devotion, it also becomes *kor*. *Kor* also includes, for example, when a benefactor wants to make an offering to the sangha or to a monastery but you tell them that

the offering is too much and, by showing concern, cause them to offer less. It also includes not offering to a monastery the amount of grain that you have pledged and using things belonging to the sangha without permission, such as coals from the monastery kitchen. *Kor* in relation to the guru (Tib. *bla ma'i dkor*) is to misuse the guru's food or belongings.

20. Instead, when you see a member of the sangha, you should think, "This is my guide freeing me from samsara and bringing me to ultimate happiness."
21. Lama Zopa Rinpoche replaced the original words "to have happiness and the causes of happiness" with "to achieve buddhahood," because "happiness" tends to bring to mind temporary samsaric happiness, whereas what sentient beings actually need is enlightenment. The original version is:

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to have
happiness and the causes of happiness.

May they have happiness and its causes.

I myself will cause them to have happiness and its causes.

Please, Guru-Buddha, bless me to be able to do this.

22. Here you can stand up and prostrate to the Thirty-Five Buddhas, if you like.
23. Pause here to meditate on rejoicing. First rejoice in your own beginning-less past, present, and future merits, repeating "How wonderful!" or "How fortunate I am!" as many times as you wish. The first time you rejoice all the merits are doubled, the second time they are quadrupled, and so forth. Then rejoice in the past, present, and future merits of all sentient beings, including bodhisattvas; and then rejoice in the past, present, and future merits of all buddhas.

If a sentient being's level of mind is lower than yours, by rejoicing in their merits you collect double their merits (and there are numberless sentient beings with a lower level of mind). If they have a higher level of mind, you collect half the merits they collect. If they have the same level of mind, you collect the same merits. By rejoicing in a buddha's merits you collect one tenth of their merits.

24. At this point visualize offering numberless golden thrones decorated with a double vajra and supported by eight snow lions. Think that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha accepts your request to remain by verbally saying, "Yes, yes," or accepts in the dharmakaya way, which means in silence. After you have offered the thrones, they absorb into Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's throne.

25. At this point visualize offering numberless radiant thousand-spoke golden dharmachakras. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha accepts your request verbally by saying, “Yes, yes,” or in the dharmakaya way, in silence.
26. The proof that offering a mandala collects extensive merit is found in King Ashoka’s life story. One day when Buddha was begging for alms, he came upon three children playing in the sand. One child stood on another child’s shoulders and the third child stood on the second child’s shoulders and offered sand in Buddha’s begging bowl while visualizing it as gold. As a result, he received the merits of actually offering that much gold, and in his next life he was born as King Ashoka, who was able to build ten million stupas in one day and make many food offerings to monks.

The fully ordained nun, Gelongma Palmo, accumulated many merits through offering mandalas and was able to accomplish Chenrezig, the buddha of compassion. Also, Lama Tsongkhapa was able to realize the unmistakable right view after having offered many hundreds of thousands of mandalas.

27. Composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso, in 1648. Extracted from the work *khams gsum chos kyi rgyal po rgyal ba tsong kha pa chen po la bstod pa dpyid kyi rgyal mo’i glu dbyangs* in the Collected Works of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (See *rgyal dbang lnga pa ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho’i gsung ’bum*, Volume 18, Beijing: *krung go’i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang*, 2009, p. 164). Translated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche and edited by Ven. Joan Nicell, FPMT Translation Services, and Ven. Ailsa Cameron, January 2018.

This verse of request by the Fifth Dalai Lama contains all the special qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings described in the elaborate “Prayer for the Flourishing of Je Tsongkhapa’s Teachings” (Tib. *blo bzang rgyal bstan ma*).

While the original verse begins “May we meet the teachings of the victorious one, Lozang Dragpa,” Lama Zopa Rinpoche often adds extra words, such as those included here: “Due to the merits of offering this mandala to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, may I, my family members, and all sentient beings be able to meet, practice, and actualize the teachings of the victorious one, Lozang Dragpa.”

Care of Dharma Materials



Dharma materials contain the teachings of the Buddha and thus protect against lower rebirth and reveal the path to enlightenment. Therefore, they should be treated with respect.

Printed Dharma materials, as well as phones, tablets, laptops, and hard drives containing Dharma, should be kept off the floor, beds, chairs, meditation cushions, and all other places where people sit or walk. Dharma materials should not be stepped over or put in places where the feet or bum will point at them. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separate from more mundane materials. Other objects, including statues, stupas, ritual implements, malas, reading glasses, etc., should not be placed on top of Dharma books and devices containing Dharma materials. Avoid licking the fingers to turn the pages of Dharma texts.

If it is necessary to dispose of printed Dharma materials, they should be burned rather than thrown in the trash. When burning Dharma texts, visualize that the letters transform into an A (ॐ) and the A absorbs into your heart. Imagine burning blank paper. As the paper burns, recite OM ĀḤ HŪḤ or the *Heart Sutra*, while meditating on emptiness.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche recommends that images of holy beings, deities, and holy objects not be burned. Ideally, they should be put in a stupa. Otherwise, put them high up in a tree inside a well-sealed structure, something like a bird house, so that the images are protected from the weather and do not end up on the ground.



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