

An Anthology of Buddhist Prayer

Jason Espada, editor

revised edition

“ ... *for the good of the world* ...

Buddhist Prayer – An Anthology

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Buddhist Prayer

Preface

When I set the table of contents of this book before me, I feel wonder. First, because of the range of Buddhist prayers that are here, and then because of the fact that we are all heirs to these traditions. Being born in these times, we have access to teachings such as these like never before.

The way I look at it, the spiritual teachings that have come down to us are our birthright, whether we know it or not, and whether or not we lay claim to them and benefit from our good fortune.

As I have thought about these teachings the last few months, I've come to see that there are three distinct ways that people can benefit from a Dharma book, or a collection such as this.

The first thing a person can gain is knowledge. All spiritual traditions offer guidelines for living. There are perennial truths here that are expressed in ways particular people will be able to relate to. These ideas about how to live are made clear to us especially in the poetry and prayers of the contemplatives, the saints and the teachers of the various Buddhist Traditions.

A second kind of benefit has to do with the energy a person can receive when they connect with a teacher or a tradition. There are great resources of nourishment, inspiration and encouragement we can tap into when we have an affinity to teachings.

The world's great religious traditions have built up their richness, and power and momentum over time, added to by generations of practitioners and realized beings. There is protection and healing here. It's quite wonderful. Of course, receiving this is on a completely personal and more subtle level, but from what I've experienced in myself and seen in others along the way, I know that for some it's something that can happen quite naturally.

Preface

The third, and most substantial way a person can benefit from teachings is when they cultivate and begin to receive the fruit of the practice for themselves.

It is my wish that we each person receive what is rightfully theirs – knowledge of what religions have taught, the encouragement of those who have gone before, and that they practice so they produce within themselves the kinds of freedom and fullness of life that is indicated.

Each generation has this responsibility – to receive the precious wisdom gathered by previous generations, to understand it and apply it, and to pass it along to future generations.

May this work help us in meeting our responsibility to the next generation. May it bring you bright nourishment and inspiration along the way. And may it be, for you as well, a celebration of our heritage.

Regarding this Second Edition:

I have replaced the first part of the introduction with two more recent essays, *An Introduction to Buddhist Prayer*, and *The Prayers of Contemplatives*. I've also added a recommended reading list.

May all beings benefit.

Jason Espada, San Francisco, December 26th, 2011.

Buddhist Prayer

An Introduction in Three Parts:

- I – An Introduction to Buddhist Prayer
- II – An Outline of Buddhist Traditions, and
- III - Buddhism in the West

Part I - An Introduction to Buddhist Prayer

In America, and in the West in general these days, people don't usually associate Buddhism and prayer. We usually think of Buddhism as a tradition that teaches quiet sitting meditation, and it is certainly that. Right below the surface, however, we find that there is a great deal of prayer in Buddhism. Some schools, such as Zen, may seem to use prayer in the usual sense only sparingly, while others, such as the Tibetan tradition use a wide range of prayers for different purposes. There are prayers for healing, for cultivating compassion and other qualities; prayers to pacify difficulty, and prayers invoking the blessings of our teachers, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, for support in all aspects of life.

To say what Buddhist prayer is, we would have to include two things: generally speaking, what Buddhism is, and, the nature of prayer.

First, a few words on the nature of prayer

What all prayer has in common, whether it is Buddhist prayer, or theistic prayer, is that **prayer expresses a world view.**

Whether a person believes in God, or in angels, or in the intercession of Saints; or in the existence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, prayer shows what a person believes in.

Even more simply with some people, praying shows their belief that prayer works for them, even if they don't understand completely *why* it works. We don't need to have a lot of philosophy behind it. If a person has some experience of prayer being effective for them, that is enough to get them to pray.

A universal human activity

It's clear that people worldwide pray for all kinds of things. It seems to be a completely universal human activity: for example, parents pray for their children, without having to be taught; people everywhere pray for good crops, and for safe journeys. I've heard one definition of prayer as 'a heart-wish'. In this sense, even atheists pray. And if there is a religious world view, then that is the form in which the prayer gets expressed.

As it is usually defined, prayer is reaching beyond what we usually think of as ourselves to receive support, grace and blessings from some benevolent power in the universe. It could be for ourselves, or for another, for a child or friend, or for the world. It is entirely natural, and spontaneous. It is the human expression of some need, or of gratitude.

Two kinds of prayer beyond words

In a brief overview of prayer, finally, there are two kinds of activity that need to be mentioned here, that are sometimes referred to as prayer, even though they don't follow the most known about pattern of using words. These two are: silent prayer, and, what can be called 'prayer-in-action'

The term silent prayer may be familiar to those who have studied Christian contemplation. Sometimes called 'the prayer of the heart', or 'practicing the presence of God', silent prayer can be a form of adoration, of thanksgiving, or it can be sitting quietly, with receptivity, a deep listening for guidance or for the answer to some problem.

A second type of prayer that may not usually be classified as such is sometimes called ‘prayer-in-action’. This is where it is not enough to wish for something, or to hope and pray for something with words alone, but, when the opportunity arises, to sit still, or to speak, to recite, or to chant, or to move our limbs. This is inspired action, not separate from our prayers of aspiration. Here, there is a clear continuum between our thought and action. The same power flows through them, from the same original intention.

In both of these, silent prayer, and in prayer in action, there is experience on a level beyond words. Such prayer-fulness is then the state of a person’s whole being, an expression of values, and an expression of their faith. Of course it will remain the case that most of what people identify as prayer uses words, but this dimension of prayer is also fully deserving of our recognition and respect. The deeper, more encompassing definitions will always be there, for anyone who wants to pick up on them.

The second part of introducing Buddhist prayer, after speaking of prayer in general, would have to be to say something about what Buddhism is. Buddhism is a way to live life with greater wisdom and compassion. Its teachings concern the nature of suffering, and propose a path that leads to the absolute end of suffering, and to genuine happiness. This is accomplished through meditation and insight into our nature.

Prayer comes into the picture as soon as we start to consider the role of cultivated thought and intention in the spiritual life. Buddhism teaches training the mind, and one of the ways we can do this is by learning to direct our thoughts in a positive direction, away from harming others, and towards actions that benefit. Prayers of aspiration can set our motivation for a session of meditation, for a day, or for our whole life. Examples of this might be for a person to pray, ‘May I keep pure ethics today’, or ‘May I give up that habit’.

As with other kinds of prayer, the different kinds of Buddhist prayer express a set of values and a world view.

Buddhist prayer, then, is prayer informed by a Buddhist world view. In every case, it is made up of a sense of where we are, and of the resources that are available to help; by what is going on and what is needed in the world and in the lives of living beings. It should be noted here that there is more than one valid, workable Buddhist world view.

A note on a Tradition that is beyond being theistic or non-theistic

In contrast to Western theistic prayer, Buddhism does not make use of the idea of a creator God. This is one significant difference. There are, however, many forms of Buddhism that recognize the existence of different levels of beings, such as devas, guardians, and local spirits. Many practitioners recognize and call upon the power and benevolent influence of our spiritual ancestors, present day teachers, as well as different levels of spiritually accomplished beings, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has said, ‘You are not alone, because all the time there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas surrounding you, loving you, guiding you, that is what they do...’

It may also come as a surprise to Westerners that, by sheer numbers, the great majority of people who refer to themselves as Buddhist practice what is called Pure Land Buddhism. Most of the Buddhists in Japan, Korea, and China, as well as many Tibetan Buddhists pray with great devotion to Amitabha Buddha – the Buddha of Infinite Light. Many millions of people recite his name-mantra ‘Namo Amitabha’ or ‘Ami-tofu’ and pray to be born after this life in his Pure Land of Sukhavati. This is regarded as being a heavenly realm, with ideal conditions for spiritual practice.

I think then that it’s not enough to refer to Buddhism as merely non-theistic, and leave it at that. It is clearly not monotheistic, but it is, I would add, grounded in spiritual realities. Perhaps a better pairing then would be theistic and recognizing a diversity of spiritual life.

Ultimately, it's taught that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and our own teachers are not separate from our own minds. Relatively, however, on the path we usually experience them that way, and so we can benefit from connecting with them and relating to them within that framework, as we develop a deeper realization of enlightened qualities.

One of the ways of relating to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is as a method of cultivation, where the 'external' and the internal complement each other. Here, one meditates upon a Buddha form with devotion and prayer, as a way to identify and to produce these same qualities in ourselves. The forms are used to help us to awaken our own Buddha Nature.

It's often asked: does the deity (Buddha or Bodhisattva) have an external reality?, and answered, relatively, yes; ultimately, no (meaning that they are not separate from our fundamental nature).

The reason I would first begin by describing *all* Buddhist Prayer at this point as the expression of diverse people's world view is to try to be as inclusive as possible. The truth be told, looking at the range of what is taught and practiced as Buddhism, there is simply no one way. Some people relate to the world as having many dimensions, and many spiritually advanced

beings, and others just to this one world that we more or less agree on. No matter. Many different cosmologies or world views can work when it comes to Buddhist practice, or to the activity of prayer. However our mind is, there is benefit to be found in prayer.

Take, for example, the wish, 'May you have happiness', or the verses for the cultivation of loving kindness and compassion, 'May all beings be happy', 'May all beings be free from suffering'. These are purely prayers of aspiration, and no faith is required in anything, beyond recognizing the power of love and compassion, and of our own thought and motivation.

From my own point of view, more important than the philosophy of prayer, is what all these practices point to – in whatever form we engage them they indicate the possibility of working with our heart and mind, and the possibility of transformation, benefitting ourselves and others. If we think

prayer is something that could help us to accomplish this, there is plenty of room to have different world views and still have it work.

One example of a prayer that can work with different Buddhist world views, perhaps, would be recognizing that ethical action brings happiness, and unethical or hurtful action brings misery. We can then aspire or pray to live a moral life. Then, if our world view in addition includes the existence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (highly realized beings that live to serve others, freeing them from suffering and bringing them happiness) or a connection to teachers, then naturally we will ask for their help and support. (...May my teachers, and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas help me to accomplish this...)

Another example of a Buddhist prayer and world view would be that elemental universal wish for our children or family to have happiness: if this is informed by an understanding of the causes of happiness as taught in Buddhism, ethics, the training of the mind, or meditation, and wisdom, then that wish for them in that sense becomes a Buddhist prayer. It reflects a Buddhist world view and understanding.

Again, if we include in our view the dimension of the existence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and the blessing power of Saints and Sages, then, naturally, we reach to these sources of light and inspiration in our prayers, with the deep wish that they benefit those we pray for.

Here is a third example of what Buddhist prayer can be: by contrast, the peace of someone who has only known the effect that comes from taking sleeping pill, and the peace of someone who has quieted the mind in meditation are very different. When a meditator or contemplative wishes for another to know peace and happiness, they have in their mind the inner peace and joy they have known. Such prayer is informed by their experience, the result of their Buddhist study and practice.

Buddhist prayer is the expression of what is felt by Buddhists to be ultimately worthwhile in life, and here is where another level of interest enters into it, if we want to know what many Buddhists are actually aiming to do when they pray.

All Buddhist prayer is informed by a Buddhist world view, on the nature of suffering and the path to happiness; of the preciousness of each life, and of our own potential. A fundamental prayer we can have from this perspective is ‘May all beings have happiness, and the causes of happiness’.

Then, if we are practicing taking care of our own life in the Buddhist way, by cultivating ethics, meditation and the freedom that comes with wisdom in the Buddhist sense, one result of whatever liberation we achieve is naturally a greater dedication to all others. This arises naturally - it does not have to be imposed from the outside. This is how the path unfolds.

Beyond the level of obscuration and affliction, our nature *is* compassion. From greater freedom, and greater empathy, our compassion can emerge. We can begin to recognize the fundamental equality of all, and to live our lives in response to that.

Enter the Maha-yana

What is called the Maha-yana, means the Great Way, in that, in its wish to benefit others, it aims to include *all* beings. A Mahayana Buddhist, in the best sense, sees that what we all need for our flourishing is something more than the material alone. What we need, ultimately, for our happiness and well being, is wisdom.

The Mahayana Buddhist Way of Life is in many ways the complete opposite of self centeredness, and of short sighted, hedonistic, materialistic culture.

It is mature prayer. It is altruism. And although it includes oneself, it is living in response to the needs of the world and of living beings. It is a willingness to give one’s life to that task of freeing all others from suffering and to bringing them all genuine happiness. Such a motivation places us in harmony with all life.

This perspective, of wanting to benefit all others, is more than a reflex, or a superficial emotional reaction. It is the result of contemplation, and an open hearted response, seeing our place in the world of struggling, suffering sentient beings.

As Shantideva wrote: ‘Although they long for happiness, they destroy the very causes of their happiness; and though they do not wish to suffer, they create the causes that bring suffering on themselves...’ Such contemplations can shift the very center of our life.

Every Mahayana Buddhist, then, embraces what is called the Bodhisattva Vow as the highest ideal and aspiration: to free each and every sentient being from suffering and the causes of suffering, and to bring them all to immutable happiness. We aim all of our maturation, our thoughts and actions, prayers and meditations to that objective, of benefitting all others in every way necessary, material and spiritual.

This Bodhisattva Vow, and bodhicitta – the thought Traditionally expressed as, ‘May I become a Buddha in order to benefit all sentient beings’, is a dependent arising. These causes and conditions come together: our perceiving the needs and seemingly endless sufferings of living beings, with compassion, and knowing a way out, naturally Vow arises from these.

Traditionally, as taught in the Tibetan Buddhism, before any practice, we set our motivation. We have the thought, ‘May this be for the benefit of all...’ and this is the great motivation that empowers the prayers and meditations of a Mahayanist.

After that, during the practice itself, whatever it is, we aim to keep a clear continuity of intention. And at the conclusion we dedicate the merit, the positive energy of our practice, to fulfilling our purpose, for example,

‘By this practice, may all beings enjoy happiness, and the causes of happiness...’

When it comes to the activity of prayer, then, we can view Buddhist Prayer in terms of **path**, which is the cultivation of some motivation or quality, and in terms of **fruit**, which is what we give as a result of our practice.

Prayer **as a path** can be training the mind in ethics, or in loving kindness. We can reflect and cultivate the feeling, for example: ‘Meeting this person tomorrow, may I have patience, and not get angry with them. May I develop

the qualities that will help them as much as I can.’ In some places, this is called prospective memory. As Matthieu Ricard taught, doing such meditations ahead of time that cultivate a positive quality, ‘prime’ us, or prepare us to engage with others in a better way.

Some people may wonder if prayer takes the place of meditation that calms the mind and by developing wisdom frees us from afflictions – meditation that has for millennia been regarded as the very heart of Buddhist practice. But it isn’t the case that prayer replaces meditation, rather, at it their best, the practices of prayer and meditation are complementary to each other. With prayer we direct our mind and energy, and with calm meditation that liberates we can connect with and uncover more of our resources. We are able to offer something deeper and more useful.

In its broadest sense, prayer can be considered to be another name for Buddha Activity.

Buddhist Prayer **as fruit** then can be offering our light, and our peace to the world. This, at its best, can be a whole way of life for a Mahayana Buddhist.

A Bodhisattva delights in benefitting others, seeing this as the most meaningful use of our life. No matter how difficult it is, no matter how long it takes, no matter what the cost... The scope of this work is expressed in

The King of Prayers, which has a verse that reads:

Limitless is the extent of space
 Limitless is the number of sentient beings
 And limitless are the karma and delusion of beings
 Such are the limits of my aspirations.

And by Shantideva, who has the prayer:

For as long as space endures
 and for as long as living beings remain,
 until then, may I too abide,
 to dispel the misery of the world

The Lam Rim Dedication has this verse:

With my heart going out with great compassion
 In whatever direction the most precious teachings have not yet spread,
 or once spread have declined,
 May I expose this treasure of happiness and aid

Cultivating this path, we become more able to intrepidly engage and to guide others.

In nearly every school of Buddhism, understanding the mind has a central place. The power of thought, and in particular the power of intention is expressed in the line by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, that: ‘All of existence depends on the tip of a wish’. Thought is the power we use to shape our lives. ‘The tip of a wish’ here refers to our motivation. One teaching says if the root of a tree is healing, the branches, leaves, flowers and fruit will all be healing. Again, it is brought out that our motivation is the deciding factor in the quality of our work, our spiritual practice, and in what we give to the world.

As with meditation and mantra practice, an individual’s prayer can become a cultivated power. We don’t know what we are capable of, and what effect our own meditation and prayer can have until we make an effort.

It’s also true that the Traditional prayers we have received can be a great aid to our lives. Prayers that have been recited by many people for generations, with concentration and devotion, have built up tremendous power over time, and if we can connect with them, they can help us a great deal. Add to this the fact that many of the Traditional prayers were written by people who are regarded as saints, such as Shantideva, Atisha, Tang Tong Gyalpo, and Tsong Khapa, as well as modern teachers such as Dudjom Rinpoche and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. As such, they are rich with insight, and blessings. Together with our own practice of having a good heart, meditation and prayer, we can gain the greatest benefit from Traditional prayers.

For some, to be a self defined ‘person of prayer’ can be a complete way of life, responsive and awake. Prayer can connect us to the Divine. It affirms our connection with each other. It can engage our creativity in the moment, connect us to Traditions, and help us to meet both suffering and joy. Prayer gives us a means to respond, and to offer, if not an immediate solution to problems, then at least solace, and hope, and the best we can give at this time, not turning away in spirit.

Seeing for ourselves the great value and effectiveness of prayer, who would not want to engage its practice in some form? It is completely natural to want to do so, especially when we see more and more of the needs that exist, and what can be done with prayer. We can direct our mind to virtue, link up with and draw from sources of great benefit, and share that with all. May all beings benefit.

The Prayers of Contemplatives

The prayers of contemplatives are not like ordinary people’s usual prayers. In Buddhist language we could say they are spoken from the Dharmakaya of Ultimate Goodness. They have that vision, and that power and quality. As the poet Robert Bly said of images and verses that are spoken from a very deep level, they are charged, they are ‘soaked with psychic substance’.

Ordinary people like myself, on rare occasions, can have some insight or inspiration flash to the surface, and, if we are smart, we hurry to write them down. A trained contemplative, on the other hand, has much easier access to the deeper levels of our true human nature, and less obstructing its expression. We ordinary folks are very much a mixed bag – some jewels, and a lot of plain matter. But those men and women we call sages are pure channels – by their very nature, they stream pure truth and blessings to the world.

Reading the prayers of contemplatives, we are nourished by what they give, and not only that. As important, we are also put in touch with that same

profound level that they speak from - in ourself. To say that anything else is going on would be to put ourselves down, and to deny our own depth.

If we are inspired to read and reflect on the words of the Saints, it's because of the benefit that comes through to us from their level of experience. If we are inspired to think, or speak, or write our own prayers, this can also be something truly significant, a sacred moment for us. Our heart is moved, and it is actually light breaking through to the surface of our lives, and streaming to where it is needed most.

The value in a contemplative's prayers, in the prayers of Traditions that have gathered power over time, is this same value that we can find in our own prayers. It is made of generosity, and insight, and the delight of something reaching us, and awakening in us.

Each generation has its poets, its seers, its lineage holders, its light bearers. So who is to say who has 'got the goods' so to speak? From an individual's

point of view, if their own prayer works for them, if it gets them 'unstuck', or brings healing energy, that is proof enough. Whether it would work for someone else is another matter. Of so many things I am not sure, I am far from complete in knowledge. But what I am sure of, at this point in my life, is this:

1. that it's a great thing to read contemplatives' prayers, as great benefit can come from it

2. that it's a great good also to be inspired by them, and to think, and speak and write our own prayers,

and

3. that we should do all we can to encourage each other to pray as much as possible, or to put it another way – to access the deep levels of our true wisdom nature and to think, speak and act in the world from there

Because of the great benefit that can come from it for us all, we should do all we can to pray our own prayers and the prayers of the Saints and Tradition. We should do all we can to fill the world with prayer.

The world needs our prayer, so much now, and what prayer can be at its best: the expression of our pure positive intentions, made of love and wisdom; vision, light, healing energy, nourishment, inspiration, comfort and joy. Prayer can illuminate and set our lives, and our world in order.

However it moves in us, prayer is the quintessential human expression. It is our thirst for light, and the powerful deeply rooted-wish that we have, to give, in words and actions, of what we have found. Beyond disillusion, we find the way again through what I call prayer. I mean this in a way that is not restricted by any one concept of the Divine. It is open to every possibility, to every way of ever saying it.

The way opens again because of the heart's intent. The world opens, and the way forward once more becomes clear. May it be this way for us all.

Introduction – II - An Outline of Buddhist Traditions

Because there are a number of different types of Buddhism, it may be helpful to sketch a general outline of the Traditions. Most generally we speak of three types of Buddhism in America - the Theravada, the Zen and the Tibetan Traditions.

The Historical Buddha was born 2,500 years ago in what is now Nepal. He was enlightened at the age of 32 and spent the next 40 years teaching ways to liberate the mind, and to benefit self and others. In his first talk, the Buddha stated the fundamental propositions of his teaching. These are called the Four Noble Truths, and the Eight-fold Path. In Buddhism, these are not thought of as dogma, simply to be accepted. Rather they are taught as an invitation, and with encouragement ‘to see for oneself’, to verify what is true for oneself.

The Four Noble Truths he set forth are:

1. That un-enlightened living is suffering;
2. That the cause of this suffering is ignorance, manifesting as ego grasping and afflictive emotions;
3. That suffering can be ended; and
4. That the way to end suffering is this Eight-fold Path, consisting of:

Right View
Right Thought
Right Speech
Right Action
Right Livelihood
Right Mindfulness
Right Effort, and
Right Concentration

An Introduction – Part II – An Outline of Buddhist Traditions

What is called the Theravada Tradition (The School of the Elders) is practiced in South East Asian countries – Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. This tradition has preserved the methods of meditation and freeing the mind based on what the Historical Buddha taught - mindfulness, calm and insight practices. Although they occasionally make reference to other lineages and teachers, their main reference is to the Historical Buddha's teachings.

At this point in discussing the world's Buddhist traditions there is a change in emphasis. By contrast we find that the Historical Buddha's teachings, as they've come down to us, emphasize personal freedom from suffering, while the later schools give more of a central place to compassion and dedicating ourselves to helping others.

It's my feeling that because the methods of the Theravada work, what came to be known as the Mahayana, with its emphasis on compassion, and the aim of benefiting all beings, came into existence.

In Tibetan Buddhism they say that the teachings of the Historical Buddha, the Theravada teachings are like the foundation of a house; that the Mahayana teachings are like the walls, doors and staircases – the interior of the house; and that the specifically Tibetan teachings, called tantra are like the roof of the house.

What they are pointing out is that there is an organic process going on here.

The Mahayana means 'The Great Way' – including all, in the sense of working for all, and dedicating our lives to benefiting and liberating all sentient beings. There are two ways the Mahayana can be entered. The first is when we reach a point in our practice when we have more room for others. Because we are not as caught in our own suffering, we can respond to them, take their needs into account, and actually work to benefit them in some way, great or small.

An Introduction – Part II – An Outline of Buddhist Traditions

This turning point is described in a text called the Lotus Sutra. In one scene early in the book, the Buddha is talking to a group of accomplished practitioners, and telling them how wonderful it is that they have followed his teachings so well, and gotten such fine results. He then goes on to say that, as great as it is that they have freed themselves, this is not the end of the path, that they must now go on and help others in need.

‘It is not enough if it is only you who escapes this circle...’

This may be a poetic way of saying that at some point, out of our own having some freedom, our compassion awakens.

They reflect in the Tibetan tradition:

‘What use is it if I accomplish even the heights of well being and bliss, if all my mothers still struggle, and must endure such sufferings...’

‘When we hear the cries of the world, we must be engaged...’

and:

‘I must work to benefit them, in every way that they need...’

The other way of entering the Mahayana is to immediately give rise to the altruistic intention, no matter where we are in our life and practice.

In Shantideva’s Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life, it says:

‘Even those fettered and weak
in the jail of cyclic existence,
the moment an awakening mind arises,
they will be born into the family of Buddhas,
and honored by men and gods of this world...’

An Introduction – Part II – An Outline of Buddhist Traditions

This is sometimes a way to get out of being caught by our own suffering and confusion – to think of others and their needs and to dedicate ourselves to them. At other times, even the word ‘others’ we will not be able to hear – the thought of others might seem too remote, or that it is just a concept, whereas our own difficulty is what is right in front of us...

It’s my feeling that we need both of these paths to compassion to give birth to the altruistic Mahayana spirit. If we maintain our practice, over the course of our lives there will be times when we awaken the motivation to benefit others out of our responsiveness to the needs in the world. Then at other times there will be some deep intuition and aspiration that flashes through our own struggles. And it’s not that this happens once. Not at all, from what I can observe. In fact, I would propose that both of these ways of generating the altruistic motivation will be used many times throughout our life. This is if we keep practicing, of course. We practice for each other – for that self that includes others, and offer the best that we have to give.

If we are able to maintain compassion for others, then there will naturally be produced in our mind a certain kind of intention for our whole life. What is called in the tradition *bodhicitta*, or *bodhimind*, or the awakening mind, is the whole-function, powerful intention to liberate our own mind from confusion and suffering, and to actualize or bring forth all beneficial, necessary qualities, so that we can best serve others.

In traditional terms, *bodhicitta* is made of love and compassion, and is the wish to become a Buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings. That mind itself, that thought, is a holy mind, a holy, profound and sacred thought, bringing only good into the world.

A person who lives to serve others is called a *bodhisattva*. Whatever other elements there are in such a person’s mind, they have this ardent wish to live in a certain way and so help others as much as they possibly can.

Praise of the holy mind of *bodhicitta*, and verses to generate this in our mind are the themes of much of the *bodhisattva* poetry in this collection.

An Introduction – Part II – An Outline of Buddhist Traditions

What is called the Bodhisattva Vow is the dedication that we have in us to helping others. This can be there with or without words, or it can be taken formally and re-affirmed. It is the commitment of our whole life energy to helping others as much as we can, and in as many ways as we can, to alleviate their suffering and to support their health and happiness. This Vow is the central principle of the Mahayana Path.

In Buddhism, The Mahayana Tradition includes the Zen, Tibetan and Pure Land Traditions.

Once we arrive at the Mahayana , with its strong central motivation to serve all beings, and to liberate all living beings, historically, and in our own practice, then I like to think that 'all bets are off'. We will utilize every resource, we will do anything to communicate the Dharma, take any form to meet people's needs, to benefit them, to speak in a way they can understand, and lead them step by step to freedom. This is the very nature of the Mahayana's history, and our present and future attitude.

A diversity of forms arose out of this motivation to benefit self and others. What is referred to in Buddhism as creative 'Skillful Means' develops out of compassionate need, and it is the overriding reason for not to be attached to any one way of doing things, or saying things. As long as we keep to essential principles, then it is Buddhist Dharma. Skillful means, or Upaya, are just what is necessary to help and to reach people.

The Sakya Trinzin, in 'Mo – The Tibetan Divination System' says the following:

“In Buddhism, especially in the Mahayana Tradition, it has been taught that the highest good is to benefit other living beings... Numerous scriptures tell us that a bodhisattva should not hesitate to use any method that would bring relative and ultimate happiness to others. The bodhisattva has been enjoined to assist others by giving them spiritual teachings, material objects such as medicine and food, fearlessness, loving kindness and advice on how to deal with the travails of worldly existence.”

There is a figure in Mahayana Buddhism (The Chinese Mahayana, and the Tibetan Tradition) called Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, who is sometimes shown with one thousand arms reaching out to help people. Of course 'a thousand' means 'limitless' in Eastern Traditions. Sometimes 'myriad' and sometimes 'Ten-thousand' are used - all these terms have the same meaning.

In the more visible hands in the iconography one can see various implements, a vase, a rosary, The Wheel of Teaching the Dharma, and so on. The meaning is that Avalokiteshvara, and our own compassionate nature has the ability to take many forms (infinite forms) to benefit others.

We can see at this point why it is so important then to understand the basics of Buddhist teachings. What makes Buddhism *Buddhism*. What makes the Dharma *Dharma*. Without this clear sense of what is essential, a teaching can be called Buddhism without it accomplishing anything that moves toward the aim of all true Buddhist teaching, which is to encourage liberation through insight into our nature, and the result of this insight, which is acting compassionately in the world.

The Zen Tradition comes from China and Japan and is known for its focus on the cultivation of Wisdom. There is less philosophy offered, less prayer, and more of an emphasis on quiet sitting meditation.

The Tibetan Buddhist Tradition, of the three main Traditions, has the biggest range of teachings, practices and prayers. There are many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (beings dedicated to the well being of all that lives) and Lineage Gurus, and these are prayed to in different ways. Sometimes they are seen as outside, sometimes as inside, and sometimes as representing our own nature.

A fourth Buddhist School is sometimes mentioned, that of the Pure Land School. This Tradition is found mainly in China and Japan. By sheer numbers, this is the Buddhist school with the most adherents. It is relatively unknown in the West, and the branches of this tradition that have made their way here have less interaction with the other Schools.

An Introduction – Part II – An Outline of Buddhist Traditions

In Pure Land Buddhism, practice focuses on Amida, the Buddha of Infinite Light, with prayers and mantras (sacred words of power) recited to invoke His blessings, and to be reborn in His Pure Land.

The emerging Western Buddhism will certainly have elements of more than one Tradition. This seems to be in our character, to fairly judge things, and to take what works. In fact, because of the great sufferings and needs that are here, we *must* search until we find the methods that work for us, and that are effective in helping others.

Introduction – III - Buddhism in the West

Here we are in the West, going on the year 2007, receiving all these wonderful teachings from living Traditions. What will we do with them?

Every time Buddhism moves to another culture it has undergone some refinement. Certain elements have been left behind, and certain key features were not only preserved and transmitted, we can even say they were given new life. (witness Bodhidharma going to China).

Consciously or not we are now in the process of creating an American Buddhism. The lines of transmission are clear, and we will be seeing over the coming years what presentation of what teachings and practices will actually reach people, benefit them, and transform lives for the better.

I'm convinced that with the many resources we have that there is a tradition that will resonate with everyone (at least one). And then, once the 'honeymoon period' in receiving these traditions is over, we'll surely see even more clearly and have a better idea of how to apply and benefit from the teachings. We'll also know what we should preserve and pass along to the next generation.

Non-Sectarian Buddhism

In Tibet, in the 19th century, a non-sectarian ('Rime') movement developed. The idea was to be established firmly in one's own tradition, while learning about and benefiting as much as possible from the teachings of other schools. I think this kind of non-sectarian approach can take root in this country. People in the West, and in America in particular have the potential, because of something in our national character, to be able to make use of a broad range of teachings.

An Introduction – Part III – Buddhism in the West

A Western non sectarian movement would be different, however, because instead of the four or five main Tibetan schools co-existing, and people learning from each, here it will be the Zen, Theravada, Tibetan and Pure Land and other of this world's religious teachings that are learned from and benefited from... People will still be grounded in one approach that suits them, and they will be able to receive these many sources of enrichment.

In America, we now have the equivalent of Orthodox Christianity here in Buddhism. What they have in common with strict traditionalists in other religions is that they deny every other approach. In some cases they even deny teachings that are very similar to their own.

And so we have at this time - Orthodox Theravada, Orthodox Zen, Orthodox Tibetan Buddhism. We're still in the process, apparently of working out what suits us best. For the most part however, the Orthodoxy that we've inherited has been this way, quite defined (or restricted, depending on how you look at it) for a long time prior to coming to this culture and this country.

From my own side, I have the utmost respect for these traditions and the many great teachers they have produced, and so what I say next should not be taken in any way as a criticism. What follows is just my own attempt to describe these traditions that developed separately from each other as they are now, with an eye to the future of Buddhism in the West.

Respectfully, here are few observations about the three main Buddhist traditions that are making their way now to the West:

The Tibetan Buddhist lineages, for all their richness, have not, historically, drawn on the fundamental teachings of the Buddha from Theravada sources. The practices of these sacred teachings may be even stronger if they did. Imagine that. Everything would flourish.

Of course people could say (and have said) that these teachings and lineages are complete in themselves, needing nothing, but ‘the proof’s in the pudding’, no?

Other examples of how the different Traditions could gain from each other: Teachers and practitioners of the Theravada teachings, though they practice the cultivation of loving kindness, have not usually studied and practiced Thought Training teachings from the Tibetan Tradition;

And though they extensively study and practice meditation, historically they have seldom studied and benefited from the teachings of Zen lineages that have a great wealth of material on calm and insight.

Each approach, while being potentially complete in itself, can also benefit from other contemplative traditions. What one tradition has emphasized and developed extensively can be shared.

For example, people who practice a lot of meditation (like those of the Zen traditions) perhaps will have the most to gain from hearing the viewpoints of other schools. If what they hear or read is of no use, it will be 'washed away', forgotten, but if it can be helpful, it can make a big difference for them. I think it's beginning to happen in Zen communities that other schools teachings are being learned and applied, but this is just the start.

Westerners and Prayer

The practice of prayer comes naturally for many in the West, and the idea of serving others is there in us as well, powerfully. This is one of the reasons Tibetan Traditions have caught on as they have in this country. With their emphasis on compassion, sacrificing the ego and dedicating oneself to others, Americans find a match for what many of us already have in us, on account of our Western religious heritage.

Because of our often understandable estrangement from organized religion (read: Christianity) for many reasons, we've just been lacking the framework to think about and the methods to put in to practice our noble religious motivations. Buddhism is providing these things for many people.

One thing that does seem odd to me though, these days, is how little Westerners who practice Buddhism know about our own religious heritage, and the many parallels that can be found. It's ironic that Western Buddhists pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and to Buddhist saints for blessings, for protection, for inspiration and for healing, without seeing the parallels that Western Traditions have in them. Catholics, for example, have a rich tradition of praying to (or through) Saints. It's ironic to me that some feel at home making offerings and praying to the Buddhist Saints, without accessing sources that could be considered 'nearer at hand' so to speak. One day, I'm sure, Western Buddhists will include the person of Jesus, chief among Western Bodhisattvas, among the sources of blessings that can be invoked.

The West - Compared to Eastern Cultures

The fact that Buddhist teachers are moving from East to West highlights some of the differences between our cultures. For one thing, modern Westerners don't have very much of a conception of other worlds besides the material. In contrast, Asian cultures' view of life includes other worlds, other dimensions that influence their lives.

What we look at in Eastern Cultures and call 'Ancestor Worship' could perhaps better be called 'Honoring the Ancestors'. There are pictures of relatives on family altars, and many homes have a book with the names or their relatives going back generations. Every time someone is born, or someone passes away, and every time someone marries, it is entered in this record.

Ancestors are honored, and their protection and wisdom is sought regularly (such as at the beginning of the Lunar New Year) and when there is some pressing need.

When I lived in Taiwan, one of the first things I noticed was that people were making public offerings, of chicken, fruit, rice crackers and incense, on tables set up in front of their homes and businesses, to what they call 'local spirits'. Offerings are made with prayers for success in business, and for protection.

People in Taiwan frequently go to temple to make offerings and to pray for success or for guidance in business or relationships. I also sensed that a much higher percentage of people there consult fortune tellers (it's not considered as much as a 'fringe' activity - it is much more mainstream). And, in Taipei, there are many small temples dedicated to Buddhas, or Gods or Goddesses and Bodhisattvas (helping spirits) that have specific purposes (for example: to help get pregnant, or to pass an exam). There is a temple dedicated to Confucius that receives offerings around exam time. People photocopy student Id's and leave the copy with an offering at these temples.

In Asian cultures, people make offerings to appease ghosts, or spirits who would otherwise cause harm, especially during 'Ghost Month'. Some people even conduct 'Spirit Marriages' to pacify the spirit of someone who died before getting married...

I say all this only to point out how culture is a whole way of looking at this world we live in, and the influences, for better and for worse that can effect our lives.

In the East, the concept of other worlds influencing this one is woven throughout people's everyday lives. We don't have this idea nearly as much in the modern Western world view.

In Catholicism, people pray to (or through) a vast array of Saints. They recognize the existence of Angels, and a Hierarchy of Spirits, and helpers,

Jesus and Mary being foremost among them. In other centuries and other countries, people had more recourse to help from the so called 'other side'. Remarkably, in our modern Western culture that we've lost this sense of other worlds and the beings and life forces that are available to assist us in our lives.

Prayer of all types calls on something greater than ourselves (or how we conceive of ourselves). It opens a channel between the worlds so that life and light can come through. Even if we are just saying, 'I pray I will be able to... stop smoking... to give up drinking... I pray I will have enough energy to accomplish this purpose...' we are referring to something greater, some...potential... If it is true that we can tap in to powers beyond our usual abilities, and that we can transmit helpful, healing energies, then why would anyone choose *not* to pray?

Perhaps overcoming disbelief happens slowly. In a materialistic society, Spirit and more subtle truths are denied, in many ways, from many directions, every day, until it is the dominant view that such things do not exist, and all possibilities (and I do mean all) are temporarily shut out.

Here I can only encourage (or *implore*) people to experiment honestly, as experience of spiritual truth is the only antidote to such harsh, anti-life materialism.

Some people say we don't need traditions, but it remains true (and to be seen for oneself) that there is an abundance of resources available to us; energies, unique qualities to match our needs, and these have been preserved and transmitted and added to over generations in Traditions.

Reading the prayers from the various traditions (the essential expressions, both in terms of the ideas of the tradition and the energy of it) can help us to most quickly find what is suitable for us individually. This is vital for our own lives and the life of this world.

An Introduction – Part III – Buddhism in the West

The purpose of Traditions, is to benefit and to assist our reaching the Ultimate, the Source of all traditions, our true home, and living from there, and with that as a basis.

Oh, Good-hearted people! - I urge you to search out Traditions and methods to see what is effective for you - what riches there are for you, what powers that can help you and can help you to help others; what clarifies and can heal, and then share from this abundance that you find with others - with friends, family, strangers, with the whole world!

Imagine an underwater system of channels
 one channel opens
 and the stream of cool, pure water can be felt moving through
 felt all the way back to its source
 Contacting a spiritual tradition can be this way
 the clean, clear life moving through
 felt in this very place, and known to its origin
 Teachers, practitioners, deities, protector spirits
 virtues faithfully maintained
 and given forward through lives
 We are welcomed by this, our family
 They are eager to assist the awakening life
 the heart becomes very quiet watching this work
 this far reaching, unceasing compassion

They speak behind their words
 move behind the curtains of form
 in silence, shaping
 All of this is given to you, it is immanent
 the life within the life

"No matter whose the teachings, my friend, if you are sure of this - 'These doctrines conduce to passion, not serenity; bondage, not freedom; attachment, not relinquishment; greed, not thrift; restlessness, not calm; noisy company, not solitude; sloth, not energy; delight in evil, not performance of good'- well, rest assured that is not the Dhamma, that is not the Discipline, that is not the Master's Way.

"But if there are teachings, no matter whose, you are sure will conduce to serenity, not passion; freedom, not bondage; relinquishment, not attachment; thrift, not greed; calm, not restlessness; solitude, not noisy company; energy, not sloth; performance of good, not delight in evil- that is the Dhamma, that is the Discipline, that is the Master's Way."

"The noble Eightfold Way arises by living with what is lovely. If already arisen, it grows to perfection by constant friendship with what is lovely."

Part I. The Prayers of the Historical Buddha, and Prayers in the
Theravada Tradition

The Prayers of the Historical Buddha

The Discourse On Love

He or she who wants to attain peace should practice being upright, humble, and capable of using loving speech. He or she will know how to live simply and happily, with senses calmed, without being covetous and carried away by the emotions of the majority. Let him or her not do anything that will be disapproved of by the wise ones.

(And this is what he or she contemplates:)

May everyone be happy and safe, and may their hearts be filled with joy. May all living beings live in security and in Peace - beings who are frail or strong, tall or short, big or small, visible or not visible, near or far away, already born or yet to be born. May all of them dwell in perfect tranquility. Let no one do harm to anyone. Let no one put the life of anyone in danger. Let no one, out of anger or ill will, wish anyone any harm.

Just as a mother loves and protects her only child at the risk of her own life, we should cultivate Boundless Love to offer to all living beings in the entire cosmos. We should let our boundless love pervade the whole universe, above, below and across. Our love will know no obstacles, our heart will be absolutely free from hatred and enmity. Whether standing or walking, sitting or lying, as long as we are awake, we should maintain this mindfulness of love in our own heart. This is the noblest way of living.

Free from wrong views, greed and sensual desires, living in beauty and realizing perfect understanding, those who practice Boundless Love will certainly transcend Birth and Death.

Selections from the Dhammapada

One man on the battlefield
conquers an army of a thousand men.
Another conquers himself - and he is greater.

Conquer yourself, not others.
Discipline yourself, learn restraint.

Neither a god, nor a gandharva, nor Mara
can topple the self-conquered man.

Month after month for a hundred years,
a man pays homage with a hundred sacrifices.
Another for a second honors a self-conquered man.
Consider him greater.

One man for a hundred years
performs the sacrificial fire in a forest.
Another for a moment honors the enlightened man.
Consider him greater.

A year's sacrifice, offering, or gift,
performed for the earning of merit,
is not worth a quarter of homage to virtue.

* * * *

The only safety is the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha,
the Four Noble Truths - the enlightened one knows this.

Suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering,
and the noble Eightfold Path that leads to the end of suffering

That is your refuge, that only is safe;
having reached that safety, all sorrows cease.

A noble man is hard to find.
The house where he is born prospers.

Blessed is the birth of the enlightened one,
blessed is the teaching of Dhamma,
blessed are they who make the Sangha,
blessed are they who live in harmony.

The man who respects those worthy of respect
(whether the enlightened one or his disciples),
those who have conquered and crossed the stream of sorrow,

The man who pays respect to those
who are free from the world, free from fear –
such a man's merit is measureless.

From the Mahasihanada Sutta

“The Tathagata, the Perfect One, appears in the world for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men.”

Verses of Homage to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, from the Anguttara Nikaya. X.92

'Indeed, the Blessed One [the Buddha] is worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge and conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine and human beings, awakened, blessed.'

'The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One, to be seen here and now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be realized by the wise for themselves.'

'The Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well... who have practiced straight-forwardly... who have practiced methodically... who have practiced masterfully — in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types — they are the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples: worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.'

A Reflection from The Dhammapada

"This must be your motto, monks: No shrinking back, no giving up the struggle, only the going forward. Always have this thought in your mind: 'Let me be reduced to skin and bone, and let my flesh and blood dry up; so long as I have a glimmer of energy I will not give up the search for truth.' This must be the way you train yourselves."

A Selection from the chapter called 'Happiness', from the Dhammapada

Let us live happily,
hating none though others hate.
Let us live without hate among those who hate.

Let us live happily,
free from disease, among the diseased.
Let us live diseaseless among the diseased.

Let us live happily,
ungrieving among others who grieve.
Let us live without grief among those who grieve.

Let us live happily, without possessions.
Let us feed on happiness like the shining gods.

The Jewel Sutta, The Sutta Nipata, 2.1, and , The 'Banner' Sutta - The Top of the Standard, Samyutta Nikaya, 11.3

The Jewel Discourse (*Ratana Sutta_1*)

The occasion for this discourse, in brief, according to the commentary, is as follows: The city of Vesali was afflicted by a famine, causing death, especially to the poor folk. Due to the presence of decaying corpses the evil spirits began to haunt the city; this was followed by a pestilence. Plagued by these three fears of famine, non-human beings and pestilence, the citizens sought the help of the Buddha who was then living at Rajagaha.

Followed by a large number of monks including the Venerable Ananda, his attendant disciple, the Buddha came to the city of Vesali. With the arrival of the Master, there were torrential rains which swept away the putrefying corpses. The atmosphere became purified, the city was clean.

Thereupon the Buddha delivered this Jewel Discourse (*Ratana sutta₂*) to the Venerable Ananda, and gave him instructions as to how he should tour the city with the Licchavi citizens reciting the discourse as a mark of protection to the people of Vesali. The Venerable Ananda followed the instructions, and sprinkled the sanctified water from the Buddha's own alms bowl. As a consequence the evil spirits were exorcised, the pestilence subsided.

Thereafter the Venerable Ananda returned with the citizens of Vesali to the Public hall where the Buddha and his disciples had assembled awaiting his arrival. There the Buddha recited the same Jewel Discourse to the gathering:
3

1. "Whatever beings (non-humans) are assembled here, terrestrial or celestial, may they all have peace of mind, and may they listen attentively to these words:
2. "O beings, listen closely. May you all radiate loving-kindness to those human beings who, by day and night, bring offerings to you (offer merit to you). Wherefore, protect them with diligence.

3. "Whatever treasure there be either in the world beyond, whatever precious jewel there be in the heavenly worlds, there is nought comparable to the Tathagata (the perfect One). This precious jewel is the Buddha.4 By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

4. "That Cessation, that Detachment, that Deathlessness (Nibbana) supreme, the calm and collected Sakyan Sage (the Buddha) had realized. There is nought comparable to this (Nibbana) Dhamma. This precious jewel is the Dhamma.5 By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

5. "The Supreme Buddha extolled a path of purity (the Noble Eightfold Path) calling it the path which unfailingly brings concentration. There is nought comparable to this concentration. This precious jewel is the Dhamma. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

6. "The eight persons extolled by virtuous men constitute four pairs. They are the disciples of the Buddha and are worthy of offerings. Gifts given to them yield rich results. This precious jewel is the Sangha.6 By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

7. "With a steadfast mind, and applying themselves well in the dispensation of the Buddha Gotama, free from (defilements), they have attained to that which should be attained (arahantship) encountering the Deathless. They enjoy the Peace of Nibbana freely obtained.7 This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

8. "As a post deep-planted in the earth stands unshaken by the winds from the four quarters, so, too, I declare is the righteous man who comprehends with wisdom the Noble Truths. This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

9. "Those who realized the Noble Truths well taught by him who is profound in wisdom (the Buddha), even though they may be exceedingly heedless, they will not take an eighth existence (in the realm of sense spheres).8 This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

10. "With his gaining of insight he abandons three states of mind, namely self-illusion, doubt, and indulgence in meaningless rites and rituals, should there be any. He is also fully freed from the four states of woe, and therefore, incapable of committing the six major wrongdoings.⁹ This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

11. "Any evil action he may still do by deed, word or thought, he is incapable of concealing it; since it has been proclaimed that such concealing is impossible for one who has seen the Path (of Nibbana).¹⁰ This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

12. "As the woodland groves though in the early heat of the summer month are crowned with blossoming flowers even so is the sublime Dhamma leading to the (calm) of Nibbana which is taught (by the Buddha) for the highest good. This precious jewel is the Buddha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

13. "The Peerless Excellent one (the Buddha) the Knower (of Nibbana), the Giver (of Nibbana), the Bringer (of the Noble Path), taught the excellent Dhamma. This precious jewel is the Buddha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

14. "Their past (kamma) is spent, their new (kamma) no more arises, their mind to future becoming is unattached. Their germ (of rebirth-consciousness) has died, they have no more desire for re-living. Those wise men fade out (of existence) as the flame of this lamp (which has just faded away). This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

15. "Whatever beings (non-human) are assembled here, terrestrial or celestial, come let us salute the Buddha, the Tathagata (the perfect One), honored by gods and men. May there be happiness.¹¹

16. "Whatever beings are assembled here terrestrial or celestial, come let us salute the perfect Dhamma, honored by gods and men. May there be happiness.

17. "Whatever beings are assembled here terrestrial or celestial, come let us salute the perfect Sangha, honored by gods and men. May there be happiness."

Notes

1. *Khp.* No. 6; *Sn.* 39

2. *Ratana* means precious jewel. Here the term is applied to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.

3. *KhpA.* 161.

4. Literally, in the Buddha is this precious jewel.

5. Literally, in the Dhamma is this precious jewel.

6. Literally, in the Sangha is this precious jewel.

7. Obtained without payment; "*avyayena*," *KhpA.* I., 185.

8. The reason why it is stated that there will be no eighth existence for a person who has attained the stage of *sotapatti* or the first stage of sanctity is that such a being can live at the most for only a period of seven existences in the realm of sense spheres.

9. *Abhithanani*; i. matricide, ii. patricide, iii. the murder of arahants (the Consummate Ones), iv. the shedding of the Buddha's blood, v. causing schism in the Sangha, and vi. pernicious false beliefs (*niyata micca ditthi*).

10. He is a *sotapanna*, stream-enterer, one who has attained the first stage of sanctity. Also see Notes at the end of the book.

11. The last three stanzas were recited by *Sakka*, the chief of Devas (gods), *KhpA.* 195.

Banner Protection (*Dhajagga Paritta 1*)

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Blessed One was living near Savatthi at Jetavana at the monastery of Anathapindika. Then he addressed the monks saying, "O monks." — "Venerable Sir," said the monks by way of reply to the Blessed One. Thereupon he spoke as follows:

"Monks, I shall relate a former incident. There arose a battle between the Devas (gods) and Asuras. Then Sakka, the Lord of the devas, addressed the devas of the Tavatimsa heaven thus:

"Happy ones, if the devas who have gone to the battle should experience fear or terror or suffer from hair standing on end, let them behold the crest of my own banner. If you do so, any fear, terror or hair standing on end arising in you will pass away.

"If you fail to look up to the crest of my banner, look at the crest of the banner of Pajapati, King of gods. If you do so, any fear, terror or hair standing on end arising in you will pass away.

"If you fail to look up to the crest of Pajapati, King of the gods, look at the crest of the banner of Varuna, King of the gods. If you do so, any fear, terror or hair standing on end arising in you will pass away.'

"Monks, any fear, terror or hair standing on end arising in them who look at the crest of the banner of Sakka... The Lord of the gods, of Pajapati... of Varuna... of Isana, the King of the gods, any fear terror or hair standing on end, may pass away, or may not pass away. What is the reason for this?

"Sakka, the Lord of gods, O monks, is not free from lust, not free from hate, not free from delusion, and is therefore liable to fear, terror, fright, and flight. I also say unto you O monks — if any fear, terror or hair standing on end should arise in you when you have gone to the forest or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house (lonely place), then think only of me thus:

"Such Indeed is the Blessed One, arahant (Consummate One), supremely enlightened, endowed with knowledge and virtue, welcome being, knower of worlds, the peerless trainer of persons, teacher of gods and men, the Buddha, the Blessed One.' Monks, if you think of me, any fear, terror, or standing of hair on end, that may arise in you, will pass away.

"If you fail to think of me, then think of the Dhamma (the Doctrine) thus: 'Well expounded is the Dhamma by the Blessed One, a Dhamma to be realized by oneself and gives immediate results, a Dhamma which invites investigation and leads up to Nibbana, a Dhamma to be understood by the wise each for himself.' Monks, if you think of the Dhamma, any fear, terror or hair standing on end, that may arise in you, will pass away.

"If you fail to think of the Dhamma, then think of the Sangha (the Order) thus: 'Of good conduct is the Order of Disciples of the Blessed One, of upright conduct is the Order of Disciples of the Blessed One, of wise conduct is the Order of Disciples of the Blessed One, of dutiful conduct is the Order of Disciples of the Blessed One. This Order of Disciples of the Blessed One — namely those four pairs of persons,² the eight kinds of individuals³ — is worthy of offerings, is worthy of hospitality, is worthy of gifts, is worthy of reverential salutations, is an incomparable field of merit for the world.' Monks, if you think of the Sangha, any fear, terror or hair standing on end, that may arise in you, will pass away. What is the reason for this? The Tathagata, O monks, who is arahant, supremely enlightened, is free from lust, free from hate, is free from delusion, and is not liable to fear, terror, fright or flight."

So said the Blessed One. Having thus spoken, the teacher, the "Welcome Being" (*Sugata*), further said:

i. Whether in forest or at foot of tree,
Or in some secluded spot, O monks,
Do call to mind that Buddha Supreme;
Then will there be no fear to you at all.

ii. If you think not of the Buddha, O monks,
That Lord of the world and Chief of men,

Then do think, O monks, of that Dhamma;
So well preached and leading to Nibbana.

iii. If you think not of the Dhamma, O monks
Well preached and leading to Nibbana;
Then do think, O monks, of that Sangha,
That wonderful field of merit to all.

iv. To those recalling the Buddha supreme,
To those recalling the Dhamma sublime,
And to those recalling the Sangha,
No fear, no terror will make them quiver.

Notes

1. *S.* i. 218.

2. The four pairs of persons constitute the four kinds of aryan disciples who have attained the four paths and four fruits of sanctity (*maggā* and *phala*), namely: *sotāpatti*, "stream-entry"; *sakadagāmi*, "once-return"; *anagāmi*, "non-return"; and *arahattha*, arahantship, the fourth and the last stage at which all fetters are severed and taints rooted out.

3. The above four pairs become eight when the Paths and Fruits are regarded separately.

The Transference of Merit, from the Tirokudda Kanda
From "Transference of Merit" in Ceylonese Buddhism By G. P.
Malalasekera, Philosophy East and West, V. 17 (1967) pp. 85-90

Every good deed produces "merit" which accumulates to the "credit" of the doer...The method of transference (of merit) is quite simple. The doer of the good deed has merely to wish that the merit he had thereby gained should accrue to someone in particular, if he so wishes, or to "all beings." The wish may be purely mental or it may be accompanied by an expression in words. This could be done with or without the particular beneficiary being aware of it.

The classic example of this transference of merit, etc., is a story connected with Bimbisara, king of Raajagaha, a contemporary of the Buddha and a great patron of Buddhism during his lifetime. It is said that the king once invited the Buddha and a retinue of monks to his palace for a meal. At the conclusion of the meal, there was heard a great din outside. The Buddha revealed that it was caused by some of Bimbisara's kinsmen who, after their death, had been born as petas (evil spirits) and were suffering pangs of hunger and thirst.

He told the king that it would be of no use to give them food or drink because, on account of their evil deeds, they could not partake of such things. But, said the Buddha, if the merit the king had gained by giving food to holy men were to be transferred to his departed kinsmen, by virtue of the merit so acquired, they would enjoy the fruits thereof and be able to satisfy their needs. This the king did and the result was immediate. The erstwhile petas now became happy beings and they made known their gratitude to the king in no uncertain terms.

The Buddha went on to say that the greatest boon one could confer on one's dead ancestors was to perform "acts of merit" and transfer to them the merit so acquired. This is the theme of the well-known Tiroku.d.da Sutta which the Buddha preached on that occasion.

Here the Buddha says, among other things:

Those who are compassionate towards their deceased relatives give, on occasion, as alms (to holy men) pure, palatable and suitable solid and liquid food, saying, "May the merit thus acquired be for the comfort and happiness of our deceased relatives." And they (the relatives) who receive the merits of almsgiving wish thus: "May our relatives, from whom we have received this boon, live long." Those who give also receive the fruits of their deed....

(In Ceylon) The dead are always remembered when any good deed is done and more specially so on occasions connected with their lives, e.g., their birth or death anniversaries.

On such occasions, there is a ritual which is generally followed. The transferor pours water from a jug or other similar vessel into a receptacle, while repeating a Pali formula which has been translated as follows:

As rivers, when full, must flow
And reach and fill the distant main;
So indeed what is given here
Will reach and bless the spirits there.
As water poured on mountain top
Must soon descend and fill the plain,
So indeed what is given here
Will reach and bless the spirits there.

Prayers in the Theravada Tradition

From 'A Chanting Guide' of the Dhammayut Order

The Sublime Attitudes

May I be happy.

May I be free from stress & pain.

May I be free from animosity.

May I be free from oppression.

May I be free from trouble.

May I look after myself with ease.

METTAA — GOOD WILL

May all living beings be happy.

May all living beings be free from animosity.

May all living beings be free from oppression.

May all living beings be free from trouble.

May all living beings look after themselves with ease.

KARU.NAA — COMPASSION

May all living beings be freed from all stress & pain.

MUDITAA — APPRECIATION

May all living beings not be deprived of the good fortune they have attained.

UPEKKHAA — EQUANIMITY

All living beings are the owners of their actions, heir to their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and live dependent on their actions.

Whatever they do, for good or for evil, to that will they fall heir.

May all beings live happily,
always free from animosity.
May all share in the blessings
springing from the good I have done.

May there be every good blessing.
May the devas protect you.
Through the power of all the Buddhas,
May you forever be well.
May there be every good blessing.
May the devas protect you.
Through the power of all the Dhamma,
May you forever be well.
May there be every good blessing.

May the devas protect you.
Through the power of all the Sangha,
May you forever be well.

From 'The Book of Protection', by Piyadassi Thera

The Value of Paritta

'Recent research in medicine, in experimental psychology and what is still called parapsychology has thrown some light on the nature of mind and its position in the world. During the last forty years the conviction has steadily grown among medical men that very many causes of diseases organic as well as functional, are directly caused by mental states. The body becomes ill because the mind controlling it either secretly wants to make it ill, or else because it is in such a state of agitation that it cannot prevent the body from sickening. Whatever its physical nature, resistance to disease is unquestionably correlated with the physiological condition of the patient.'¹

'Mind not only makes sick, it also cures. An optimistic patient has more chance of getting well than a patient who is worried and unhappy. The recorded instances of faith healing includes cases in which even organic diseases were cured almost instantaneously.'²

In this connection it is interesting to observe the prevalence, in Buddhist lands, of listening to the recital of the *dhamma* or the doctrine of the Buddha in order to avert illness or danger, to ward off the influence of malignant beings, to obtain protection and deliverance from evil, and to promote health, prosperity, welfare, and well-being. The selected discourses for recital are known as "*paritta suttas*," discourses for protection. But they are not "*rakshana mantras*" or protective incantations found in Brahmanic religion, nor are they magical rites. There is nothing mystical in them.

"*Paritta*" in Pali, "*paritrana*" in Sanskrit and "*pirit*" (pronounced *pirith*) in Sinhala³ mean principally protection. Paritta suttas describe certain suttas or discourses delivered by the Buddha and regarded as affording protection. This protection is to be obtained by reciting or listening to the *paritta suttas*. The practice of reciting or listening to the *paritta suttas* began very early in the history of Buddhism. The word *paritta*, in this context, was used by the

Buddha, for the first time, in a discourse known as *Khandha Paritta 4* in the *Culla Vagga* of the *Vinaya Pitaka* (vol. ii, p. 109), and also in the *Anguttara Nikaya* under the title "*Ahi (metta) Sutta*" (vol. ii, p. 82). This discourse was recommended by the Buddha as guard or protection for the use of the members of the Order. The Buddha in this discourse exhorts the monks to cultivate *metta* or loving-kindness towards all beings.

It is certain that paritta recital produces mental well-being in those who listen to them with intelligence, and have confidence in the truth of the Buddha's words. Such mental well being can help those who are ill to recover, and can also help not only to induce the mental attitude that brings happiness but also to overcome its opposite. Originally, in India, those who listened to paritta sayings of the Buddha understood what was recited and the effect on them was correspondingly great. The Buddha himself had paritta recited to him, and he also requested others to recite paritta for his own disciples when they were ill. ⁵ This practice is still in vogue in Buddhist lands.

The Buddha and the arahants (the Consummate Ones) can concentrate on the paritta suttas without the aid of another. However, when they are ill, it is easier for them to listen to what others recite, and thus focus their minds on the dhamma that the suttas contain, rather than think of the dhamma by themselves. There are occasions, as in the case of illness, which weaken the mind (in the case of worldlings), when hetero-suggestion has been found to be more effective than autosuggestion.

According to the teachings of the Buddha the mind is so closely linked with the body that mental states affect the body's health and well being. Some doctors even say there is no such thing as purely physical disease. That even so grossly "physical" a complaint as dental caries may be due to mental causes was maintained in a paper read before the American Dental Congress in 1937. The author pointed out that children living on a perfectly satisfactory diet may still suffer dental decay. In such cases, investigation generally shows that the child's life at home or at school is in some way unsatisfactory. The teeth decay because their owner is under mental strain.⁶ Unless, according to the Buddhist doctrine of *kamma* (Sanskrit *karma*), ⁷ these bad mental states are caused as a result of one's own acts (*akusala*

kamma-vipaka), and are therefore unalterable, it is possible so to change these mental states as to cause mental health and physical well-being to follow thereafter.

I. The Power of Truth

Several factors combine to contribute towards the efficacy of paritta recitals. Paritta recital is a form of *saccakiriya*, i.e., an asseveration of truth. Protection results by the power of such asseveration. This means establishing oneself in the power of truth to gain one's end. At the end of the recital of each sutta, the reciters bless the listeners with the words, *etena sacca vajjena sotti te hotu sabbada* which means "by the power of the truth of these words may you ever be well." The saying, "the power of the dhamma or Truth protects the follower of the dhamma" (*dhammo have rakkhati dhammcarin*) indicates the principle behind these sutta recitals.

"The belief in the effective power to heal, or protect, of the *saccakiriya*, or asseveration of something quite true, is but another aspect of the work ascribed to the paritta."8

2. The Power of Virtue

Several discourses of the Book of Protection describe the virtuous life. The starting point in Buddhism is *sila* (virtue). Standing on the firm ground of *sila* one should endeavor to achieve a collected mind. If it is true that virtue protects the virtuous, then a person who listens to the recital of paritta suttas intelligently, in a reflective mood, with complete confidence in the Buddha's words, uttered by one who has gained complete Enlightenment, will acquire so virtuous a state of mind as would enable him to dominate any evil influence, and to be protected from all harm.

3. The Power of Love

The utterances of the compassionate Buddha are never void of love. He walked the high-ways and by-ways of India enfolded all within the aura of his love and compassion, instructing, enlightening, and gladdening the many by his teaching. The reciters of the paritta are therefore expected to do so with a heart of love and compassion wishing the listeners and others weal and happiness and protection from all harm.

Love (*metta*) is an active force. Every act of one who truly loves is done with the pure mind to help, to cheer and to make the paths of others more easy, more smooth and more adapted to the conquest of sorrow, the winning of the Highest Bliss.

C. A. F. Rhys Davids commenting on amity (*metta*) writes: "The profession of amity, according to Buddhist doctrine, was no mere matter of pretty speech. It was to accompany and express a psychic suffusion of the hostile man or beast or spirit with benign, fraternal emotion — with *metta*. For strong was the conviction, from *Sutta* and *Vinaya*, to Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhi Magga*,⁹ that "thoughts are things," that psychical action, emotional or intellectual, is capable of working like a force among forces. Europe may yet come round further to this Indian attitude."¹⁰

4. The Power of Sound

It is believed that the vibratory sounds produced by the sonorous and mellifluous recital of the paritta suttas in their Pali verses are soothing to the nerves and induce peace and calm of mind; they also bring about harmony to the physical system.

How can bad influences springing from evil beings be counteracted by recital of paritta suttas? Bad influences are the results of evil thinking. They can, therefore, be counteracted by wholesome states of mind. One sure way of inducing a wholesome state of mind is by listening and reflecting on paritta recitals with intelligence and confidence. So great is the power of

concentration that by adverting whole-heartedly to the truth contained in the paritta recitals one is able to develop a wholesome state of mind.

The recital of paritta suttas can also bring material blessings in its wake through the wholesome states of mind induced by concentration and confidence in listening intelligently to the recital. According to the Buddha, right effort is a necessary factor in overcoming suffering.¹¹ Listening to these recitals in the proper way can also generate energy for the purpose of securing worldly progress while it also secures spiritual progress.

There is no better medicine than truth (Dhamma) for the mental and physical ills which are the causes of all suffering and misfortune. So the recital of paritta suttas in as much as they contain the dhamma, may, when they are listened to in the proper attitude, bring into being wholesome states of mind which conduce to health, material progress and spiritual progress. The effect of Pirit can also transcend distance however great.

It is true that the Buddhists consider the parittas as a never-failing, potent, and purifying force, a super-solvent. However, a question may arise whether recitals from the Book of Protection will, in every case, result in the protection and blessing sought for. In this connection the same reply given by the Venerable Nagasena to King Milinda's question why the recital of paritta does not in all cases protect one from death, is worth remembering: "Due to three causes recital of paritta may have no effect: kamma hindrances (*kammavarana*); hindrances from defilements (*kilesavarana*); lack of faith (*asaddhanataya*)." ¹²

Kamma means action and not the result of action; therefore action can be counteracted by other action. Kamma is not something static, but is always changing, i.e., always in the making; that being so, action can be counteracted by other action. Hence bad actions on the part of the hearers of the recital may negative the beneficial effects of the recital.

If the mind of the hearer is contaminated with impure thoughts then also the intended beneficial effects of the recital may not materialize. But however impure the mind of the hearer may be if there is great confidence in the

efficacy of the recital then this important factor may help to secure for him the beneficial effects of the recital.

(The Jewel Sutta, and the Banner Protection are examples of paritta, from The Book of Protection)

Notes

1. For the physical basis of resistance, see *The Nature of Disease* by J. E. R. McDonagh, F.R.C.S.
2. Aldous Huxley. *Ends and Means* (London, 1946), p. 259.
3. The state language of Sri Lanka (Ceylon).
4. See below, discourse no. 5.
5. See below *Bojjhanga* and *Girimananda suttas*, numbers 12, 13, 14 and 15.
6. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, London 1946, p. 259.
7. Karma in Buddhism means action brought about by volition.
8. C. A. F. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, part 3, p. 186.
9. Chapter ix. p. 313. According to the *Sasamalankara* quoted in Gray's *Buddhaghosuppatti*, p.15, Buddhaghosa was about to write a Commentary on the *Paritta*, when he was sent to greater work in Ceylon.
10. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, part 3, p. 185.
11. S. i. 214.
12. *Milinda Pañha*, vol. I., p. 216.

From Bhavana Vandana, The Book of Devotion, compiled by
Gunaratana Mahathera

Offering

I pay reverence to every shrine
that may stand in any place,
the bodily relics, the Bodhi Tree,
and all images of the Buddha.

I have gained a vast mass of merit
honoring the most honorable Triple Gem;
by the spiritual power of that merit
may my obstacles be destroyed.

With candle lights dispelling dark
I venerate the perfect Buddha,
the light of the triple world,
who dispels the darkness of delusion.

With this incense sweetly scented,
made from fragrant substances,
I venerate the One worthy of reverence,
the supreme recipient of offerings.

This cluster of flowers,
beautiful, fragrant, and excellent,
I offer at the holy lotus feet
of the noble lord of sages.

With these flowers I venerate the Buddha,
by this merit may I gain liberation.
As these flowers fade and wither
so will my body be destroyed.

By this practice of Dhamma, in accord with the Dhamma,
I venerate the Buddha.

By this practice of Dhamma, in accord with the Dhamma,
I venerate the Dhamma.

By this practice of Dhamma, in accord with the Dhamma,
I venerate the Sangha.

Closing Recollection

All actions are led by the mind;
mind is their master, mind is their maker.
Act or speak with a defiled state of mind,
and suffering will follow
as the cart-wheel follows the foot of the ox.

All actions are led by the mind;
mind is their master, mind is their maker.
Act or speak with a pure state of mind,
and happiness will follow
as your shadow that remains behind without departing.

Asking for Pardon

If, due to negligence, I have done some wrong
by body, speech, or mind,
pardon me that offence, Bhante,
Perfect One of vast wisdom.

If, due to negligence, I have done some wrong
by body, speech, or mind,
pardon me that offence, O Dhamma,
visible and immediately effective.

If, due to negligence, I have done some wrong
by body, speech, or mind,
pardon me that offence, O Sangha,
practicing well and supreme.

By means of this meritorious deed
may I never join with the foolish.
May I join always with the wise
until the time I attain nibbana.

May the suffering be free from suffering,
may the fear-struck be free from fear,
may the grieving be free from grief.
So too may all beings be.
From the highest realm of existence to the lowest,
may all beings arisen in these realms
with form and without form,
with perception and without perception
be released from all suffering
and attain to perfect peace.
Excellent! Excellent! Excellent!

Great Verses of Joyous Victory

For the welfare of all living beings
the great compassionate Protector
fulfilled all the perfections
and attained supreme enlightenment.
By the power of this truth
may joyous victory be mine.

Victorious beneath the Bodhi tree
he brought delight to the Sakya clan
May I too triumph in such a way,
may I achieve joyous victory.

I revere the jewel of the Buddha,
the highest and most excellent balm,
beneficial to gods and human beings
By the power of the Buddha
may all misfortune be destroyed
may all suffering cease for me.
I revere the jewel of the Dhamma,
the highest and most excellent balm,
cooling down the fever of defilements.
By the power of the Dhamma
may all misfortune be destroyed
may all fears cease for me.

Whatever jewels may exist in the world,
numerous and diversified,
there is no jewel equal to the Buddha.
By this truth may I be secure.

Whatever jewels may exist in the world,
numerous and diversified,
there is no jewel equal to the Dhamma.
By this truth may I be secure.

Whatever jewels may exist in the world,
numerous and diversified,
there is no jewel equal to the Sangha.
By this truth may I be secure.

For me there is no other refuge,
the Buddha is my matchless refuge;
by the power of this truth

may joyous victory be mine.

For me there is no other refuge,
the Dhamma is my matchless refuge;
by the power of this truth
may joyous victory be mine.

For me there is no other refuge,
the Sangha is my matchless refuge;
by the power of this truth
may joyous victory be mine.

May all calamity be warded off,
may all illness be dispelled,
may no obstacles hinder me,
may I live long and happily.
May all good fortune come my way,
may all the deities protect me,
by all the power of the Buddha
may I always enjoy well-being.

May all good fortune come my way,
may all the deities protect me,
by all the power of the Dhamma
may I always enjoy well-being.

May all good fortune come my way,
may all the deities protect me,
by all the power of the Sanhga
may I always enjoy well-being.

By the power of this protective recital
may my misfortunes due to stars
demons, harmful spirits and ominous planets
be prevented and destroyed

May rain fall in due time,
may there be a rich harvest,
may the world be prosperous
may the government be righteous.

By the power of all supreme Buddhas,
by the power of all silent Buddhas,
and by the power of the Arahants,
I secure protection in every way.

Verses On the Buddha's Joyous Victories

1. When Mara, seated atop his trumpeting, fierce elephant Girimekhala, surrounded by his troops, created a thousand arms bearing weapons, the Lord of Sages conquered him by means of his virtues such as generosity. By this power may joyous victory be mine.
2. When the fierce, obstinate demon Alavaka, more violent than Mara, fought with him all night, the Lord of Sages conquered him by means of his patience and self-control. By this power may joyous victory be mine.
3. When the royal elephant Nalagiri, terrible as a forest fire or thunder-bolt, came at him intoxicated, the Lord of Sages conquered him with radiance of his loving-kindness. By this power may joyous victory be mine.
4. When the terrible and fearsome murderer Angulimala pursued him for three leagues with upraised sword, the Lord of Sages conquered him by resorting to his psychic powers. By this power may joyous victory be mine.
5. When Cinca, with a bundle of sticks bound to her belly to simulate pregnancy, tried to defame him in the midst of an assembly, the Lord of Sages conquered her by his calm and gentleness. By the power of this may joyous victory be mine.

6. Arrogant Saccaka, the famous disputant, was extremely blind and overconfident, but having deviated from the truth, the Lord of Sages conquered him by lighting the lamp of wisdom. By this power may joyous victory be mine.
7. The dragon Nandopananda was intelligent and powerful, but the Lord of Sages advised His son, His spiritual son, the arahat Elder to subdue him with his psychic powers. By this power may joyous victory be mine.
8. When the Brahma named Baka – pure, radiant, and powerful – was bitten by the snake of wrong views, the Lord of Sages conquered him with his medicine of knowledge. By the power of this may joyous victory be mine.
9. The wise person who earnestly memorizes these eight verses on the Buddha's joyous victories and recites them daily will be freed from diverse misfortunes and gain happiness and liberation.

Protection by Factors of Enlightenment

The enlightenment-factors are reckoned thusly:

mindfulness,

then investigation of Dhammas,

energy, joy, tranquility.

The enlightenment-factors continue further:

collectedness, equanimity.

These seven, which the All-seeing

Muni has rightly taught,

cultivated and frequently practiced

bring about the superknowledges,

Nibbana and Enlightenment.

By the speaking of this truth

May I always be safe.

At one time the Lord,

having seen Maha Moggallana

and Maha Kassapa

suffering from painful sickness

recited the seven factors of enlightenment

and they, rejoicing,

instantly recovered from sickness.

By these words of truth

may I always be safe.

Once, when the King of Dhamma

was afflicted by illness

Maha Cunda Thera on this occasion

was kindly requested to recite.

And He, rejoicing,

recovered from sickness.

By these words of truth

may I always be safe.

Those three Great Sages,
were freed from their illness
just as the Path destroys the defilements,
for those who attain it
By these words of truth
May you always be safe

Practicing Loving Kindness

By Dr. Henepola Gunaratana Nayaka Thera

One should spend some time every day to practice loving-kindness. We recommend that you repeat the following outline every time you practice loving-kindness meditation. If you know a better structure other than this you may follow it. Read each paragraph once and then close your eyes and reflect upon the meaning of that paragraph for ten seconds. Open your eyes and read the next paragraph. You might take more than an hour to read these passages and feel loving-kindness in your entire mind and body. Do it every day. This alone is a wonderful meditation to overcome resentment that has been troubling you for a long time.

1. May I be well, happy and peaceful. May no harm come to me. May no difficulties come to me. May no problems come to me. May I always meet with success. May I also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.
2. May my parents be well, happy and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May no difficulties come to them. May no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.
3. May my teachers be well, happy and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May no difficulties come to them. May no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.
4. May my relatives be well, happy and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May no difficulties come to them. May no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage,

understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

5. May my friends be well, happy and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May no difficulties come to them. May no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

6. May all indifferent persons be well, happy and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May no difficulties come to them. May no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

7. May all unfriendly persons be well, happy and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May no difficulties come to them. May no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

8. May all living beings be well, happy and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May no difficulties come to them. May no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

1. May I be happy, and free from suffering!
And, always, like my self
may my friends, neutral persons,
and the hostile be happy too.

2. May all beings in this village,
in this state, in other countries,
and in the world systems
be ever happy.

3. May all persons, individuals,
beings, creatures
in all world systems
be ever happy.

4. So too, may all women, men,
noble ones, non-noble ones,
gods, humans, and beings
in the lower worlds be happy.

May all beings in the ten directions be happy

May I be free from hatred! May I be free from affliction! May I be free from worry! May I live happily! As I am, so also may my parents, teachers, preceptors, friendly, indifferent, and hostile beings, be free from hatred! May they be free from affliction! May they be free from worry! May they live happily! May they be released from suffering! May they not be deprived of their fortune, duly acquired! All of us have Kamma as our own possession.

May all beings... all living things... all creatures... all persons...all those who have arrived at a state of individuality, all women... all men...all noble ones... all non-noble ones...all gods...all humans...all non-humans...all those who are in the hell, and in this home, village, town, this country, in this world, in this galaxy, may all of them without any exception be free from worry! May they live happily! May they be released from suffering! May they not be deprived of their fortune, duly acquired! All have Kamma as their own possession. May all beings be happy and secure!

May all beings have happy minds!

Whatever living beings there may be
without exception, weak or strong,
long, large, middling
short, subtle, or gross,
visible or invisible,
living near or far,
born or coming to birth
may all beings have happy minds!

Let no one deceive another
nor despise anyone anywhere.
Neither in anger nor enmity
should anyone wish harm to another.
As a mother would risk her own life
to protect her only child,
even so towards all living beings
one should cultivate a boundless heart.
One should cultivate for all the world
a heart of boundless loving-kindness
above, below, and all around,
unobstructed, without hate or enmity.
Whether standing, walking or sitting,
lying down or whenever awake,
one should develop this mindfulness;
this is called divinely dwelling here.

May those with no feet receive my love;
May those with two feet receive my love;
May those with four feet receive my love;
May those with many feet receive my love;
May those with no feet not hurt me
May those with two feet not hurt me
May those with four feet not hurt me
May those with many feet not hurt me
May all beings, all those with life,
May all who have become, all in their entirety,
May all see what is good
May suffering not come to anyone.
May the suffering be free from suffering.
May the fear-struck be free from fear.
May the grieving be free from grief.
so too may all beings be.

From the highest realm of existence to the lowest,
may all beings arisen in these realms
with form and without form,
with perception and without perception
be released from all suffering
and attain to perfect peace.

May my mind be filled with the thought of loving-kindness, compassion,
appreciative joy, equanimity! May I be generous! May I be gentle! May I be
relaxed! May I be happy and peaceful! May I be healthy! May my heart
become soft! May my words be pleasing to others!

1. May all that I see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think help me to cultivate
loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity! May all of them
help me to cultivate the thought of generosity and gentleness! May all of
them help me to relax and activate my friendly behavior! May all of them be
a source of peace and happiness. May they help my personality! May they
help me to be healthy! May all of them help me to be free from fear, tension,
anxiety, worry, and restlessness!

Whether I walk to the east, southeast, south, southwest, west, northwest,
north and northeast, no matter where I go in the world may I meet people
with happiness, peace and friendliness. May I be protected in all directions
from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear!

2. May the minds of my parents be filled with the thought of loving-
kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity! May they be generous!
May they be gentle! May they be relaxed! May they be happy and peaceful!
May they be healthy! May their hearts become soft! May their words be
pleasing to others!

May all that my parents see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think help them to
cultivate loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity! May
all of them help them to cultivate the thought of generosity and gentleness!
May all of them help them to relax and activate their friendly behavior!

May all of them be a source of peace and happiness. May they help their personalities! May they help them to be healthy! May all of them help them to be free from fear, tension, anxiety, worry, and restlessness!

Whether they walk to the east, southeast, south, southwest, west, northwest, north and northeast, no matter where they go in the world may they meet people with happiness, peace and friendliness. May they be protected in all directions from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear!

3 May the minds of my teachers be filled with the thought of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity!...

4. May the minds of my relatives be filled with the thought of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity!...

5. May the minds of my friends be filled with the thought of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity!...

6. May the minds of all indifferent persons be filled with the thought of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity!...

7. May the minds of all unfriendly persons be filled with the thought of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity!...

8. May the minds of all living beings be filled with the thought of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity! May they be generous! May they be gentle! May they be relaxed! May they be happy and peaceful! May they be healthy! May their hearts become soft! May their words be pleasing to others!

May all that all living beings see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think help them to cultivate loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity! May all of them help them to cultivate the thought of generosity and gentleness! May all of them help them to relax and activate their friendly behavior! May all of them be a source of peace and happiness. May they help their personalities! May they help them to be healthy! May all of them help them to be free from fear, tension, anxiety, worry, and restlessness!

Whether they walk to the east, southeast, south, southwest, west, northwest, north and northeast, no matter where they go in the world may they meet people with happiness, peace and friendliness. May they be protected in all directions from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear!

Let each and every one of us think that our minds are free from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear. Let the thought of loving-kindness embrace us, envelope us. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of our entire bodies and minds be charged with the thought of friendliness. Let us relax the body. Let us relax the mind. Let our body and mind be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving-kindness pervade our entire bodies and minds.

Let us expand the area of our thought of friendship to the entire room that you are sitting in and wish that each and everyone in this room be free from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear.

Let these thoughts of loving-kindness embrace all of them, envelope them. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds. Let their bodies and minds be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving-kindness pervade their entire bodies and minds.

Let us direct our minds in the eastern direction and wish all living beings in that direction be free from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear. Let these thoughts of loving-kindness embrace all of them, envelope them. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds. Let their bodies and minds be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving-kindness pervade their entire bodies and minds.

Let us direct our minds to the south-eastern ...

Let us direct our minds to the southern direction...

Let us direct our minds to the south-western direction...

Let us direct our minds to the western direction...

Let us direct our minds to the north-western direction...

Let us direct our minds to the northern direction...

Let us direct our minds to the north-eastern direction...

Let us direct our minds to the celestial direction...

Let us direct our minds to the terrestrial direction and wish all living beings in that direction be free from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear. Let these thoughts of loving-kindness embrace all of them, envelope them. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds.

Let their bodies and minds be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving-kindness pervade their entire bodies and minds.

May all beings in all directions, all around the universe be beautiful; let them be happy; let them have good fortune; let them be wealthy; let them be famous; let them have good friends; let them after death be reborn in heavens.

May all beings everywhere be filled with the feeling of loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, measureless, free from enmity, free from affliction and anxiety. May they live happily.

May all those who are imprisoned legally or illegally, all who are in police custody anywhere in the world waiting trials meet with peace and happiness. May they be free from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear. Let these thoughts of loving-kindness embrace all of them, envelope them.

Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds. Let their bodies and minds be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving-kindness pervade their entire bodies and minds.

May all of them in all directions, all around the universe be beautiful; let them be happy; let them have good fortune; let them be wealthy; let them be famous; let them have good friends; let them after death be reborn in heavens.

May all who are in hospitals suffering from numerous sicknesses meet with peace and happiness. May they be free from pain, afflictions, depression, disappointment, dissatisfaction, anxiety and fear. Let these thoughts of loving-kindness embrace all of them, envelope them. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds. Let their bodies and minds be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving-kindness pervade their entire bodies and minds.

May all of them in all directions, all around the universe be beautiful; let them be happy; let them have good fortune; let them be wealthy; let them be famous; let them have good friends; let them after death be reborn in heavens.

May all mothers who are in pain in delivering babies meet with peace and happiness. May they be free from pain, afflictions, depression, disappointment, dissatisfaction, anxiety and fear. Let these thoughts of loving-kindness embrace all of them, envelope them. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds. Let their bodies and minds be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquility of loving-kindness pervade their entire bodies and minds.

May all of them in all directions, all around the universe be beautiful; let them be happy; let them have good fortune; let them be wealthy; let them be famous; let them have good friends; let them after death be reborn in heavens.

May all single parents taking care of their children meet with peace and happiness. May they be free from pain, afflictions, depression, disappointment, dissatisfaction, anxiety and fear. Let these thoughts of loving-kindness embrace all of them, envelope them. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds. Let their bodies and minds be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving-kindness pervade their entire bodies and minds.

May all of them in all directions, all around the universe be beautiful; let them be happy; let them have good fortune; let them be wealthy; let them be famous; let them have good friends; let them after death be reborn in heavens.

May all children abused by adults in numerous ways meet with peace and happiness. May they be free from pain, afflictions, depression, disappointment, dissatisfaction, anxiety and fear. Let these thoughts of loving-kindness embrace all of them, envelope them.

Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds. Let their bodies and minds be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving-kindness pervade their entire bodies and minds.

May all of them in all directions, all around the universe be beautiful; let them be happy; let them have good fortune; let them be wealthy; let them be famous; let them have good friends; let them after death be reborn in heavens.

May all rulers be gentle, kind, generous, compassionate, considerate and have best understanding of the oppressed, underprivileged, discriminated and the poverty-stricken. May their hearts melt at the suffering of the unfortunate citizens. May they be free from pain, afflictions, depression, free from disappointment, dissatisfaction, anxiety and fear. Let these thoughts of loving-kindness embrace all of them, envelope them. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds. Let their bodies and minds be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving-kindness pervade their entire bodies and minds.

May the oppressed, underprivileged, discriminated and the poverty-stricken meet with peace and happiness. May they be free from pain, afflictions, depression, free from disappointment, dissatisfaction, anxiety and fear. Let these thoughts of loving-kindness embrace all of them, envelope them. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds. Let their bodies and minds be filled with the thought of loving-kindness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving-kindness pervade their entire bodies and minds.

May all of them in all directions, all around the universe be beautiful; let them be happy; let them have good fortune; let them be wealthy; let them be famous; let them have good friends; let them after death be reborn in heavens.

From 'The Jewel of the Dhamma', by S.N. Goenka

Metta - Loving Kindness

Dhamma is not Hindu or Buddhist,
not Sikh, Muslim, or Jain;
Dhamma is purity of heart,
peace, happiness, serenity.

May the bonfire of hatred burn down
to nothing but ashes.
May the Ganges of love spill over
and flow through the hearts of all.

May our hearts be pure,
filled with virtue;
may the pool of the mind ripple
with compassion, love, and truth.

May the three streams of truth, non-violence, and love
join and flow together.
May the dry and withered garden
revive its blooms.

When the weight of evil is removed,
the body fills with rapture;
the brimming heart flows over
with the water of pure love.

May all the world enjoy well-being;
may all people be happy.
May poverty and suffering be dispelled;
may the ills of existence be vanquished.

May ripples of love spread
through the pool of the mind.
May every pore give forth the sound
"May all beings be happy!"

I pardon all,
may all pardon me.
All are my friends;
I have no enemies.

With goodwill, compassion, and love,
body and mind are enraptured.
Human life becomes fruitful,
happy in every way.

May the light of Dhamma arise again
dispelling the darkness,
for the good and happiness of many,
for the benefit of many.

Of hatred and ill will
may not a trace remain,
May love and goodwill
fill body, mind, and life.

Against oppression and aggression
resist with all your strength,
but for the aggressor
keep love within your heart.

May the wretched be freed of suffering,
may the fearful lose their fear.
May all people forsake enmity;
may they love each other.

May my happiness and peace
be shared by one and all.
May this munificent Dhamma
benefit one and all.

May goodwill arise, mighty in power,
and ripple through every particle of your being.
May a fountain of love gush forth
spreading happiness through body and mind.

As a mother overflows with love
for her only son,
may we keep feeling love
for all the universe.

May the Dhamma arise in everyone,
may everyone be happy.
May suffering be removed from the minds of all,
may all beings be happy.

I pay respects to Dhamma.
What a holy path!
Whoever walks upon this path
naturally becomes a saint.

May the Dhamma arise in everyone,
may everyone be happy.
May suffering be ended in the minds of all;
may the minds of all be at peace.

May the stream of pure Dhamma
keep flowing in the world,
for the happiness of everyone,
for the benefit of all.

Sharing Merits, from Bhavana Vandana

Let this merit go to our relatives;
may our relatives be happy.

As the rivers full of water
go to make the ocean full,
so may that which is given here
go to the benefit of the departed.

As water fallen on the highlands
flows down to the plains below,
so may that which is given here
go to the benefit of the departed.

By this may you achieve
longevity,
good health,
a rebirth in the heavens,
and the attainment of nibbana.

May all your hopes and wishes succeed,
may all your desires be fulfilled
like the moon on the full-moon day.

May all your hopes
and wishes quickly succeed,
may all your desires be fulfilled
like the moon on the full-moon day.

Dedication from 'A Chanting Guide' of the Dhammayut Order

May all beings — without limit, without end —
have a share in the merit just now made,
and in whatever other merit I have made.

Those who are dear & kind to me —
beginning with my mother & father —
whom I have seen or never seen;
and others, neutral or hostile;

beings established in the cosmos —
the three realms, the four modes of birth,
with five, one, or four aggregates —
wandering on from realm to realm:

If they know of my dedication of merit,
may they themselves rejoice,
And if they do not know,
may the devas inform them.

By reason of their rejoicing
in my gift of merit,
may all beings always live happily,
free from animosity.

May they attain the Serene State,
and their radiant hopes be fulfilled.

From 'Teachings of The Buddha', edited by Jack Kornfield

A Blessing Chant

Just as water flowing in the streams and rivers fills the ocean, thus may all your moments of goodness touch and benefit all beings, those here now and those gone before.

May all your wishes be soon fulfilled as completely as the moon on a full-moon night, as successfully as from the Wish-Fulfilling Gem. May all dangers be averted; may all disease leave you.

May no obstacles come across your way and may you enjoy happiness and long life.

May those who are always respectful, honoring the way of the elders, prosper in the four blessings of old age, beauty, happiness, and strength.

Sharing Blessings

By the blessings that have arisen from my practice, may my Venerable
Preceptors,
And Teachers who have helped me, Mother, Father and relatives,
King and Queen, worldly powers, virtuous human beings,
The Supreme Beings, Demons and High Gods, the guardian deities of the
world, celestial beings,
The Lord of Death; people - friendly, indifferent and hostile -
May all beings be well! May the skilful deeds done by me
Bring you three-fold bliss. May this quickly bring you to the Deathless.
By this act of goodness and through the act of sharing,
May I likewise attain the cutting-off of craving and clinging.
Whatever faults I have until I attain liberation,
May they quickly perish. Wherever I am born, may there be
An upright mind, mindfulness and wisdom, austerity and vigour.
May harmful influences not weaken my efforts.
The Buddha is the unexcelled protector, the Dhamma is the supreme
protection,
Peerless is the ' Silent Buddha' , the Sangha is my true refuge.
By the power of these Supreme Ones, may I rise above all ignorance.

Part II. The Bodhisattva Vow, and Producing the Mahayana Motivation.

From Chandragomin, as quoted in Preparing for Tantra

Even a cow knows how to take care of himself,
to eat a few clumps of grass
he easily comes across

Even the beast can merrily drink
from a pool of water he finds
as bitter thirst torments him

But think now what it is
to put your whole heart
into taking care of others;
This is glory,
This is a park of pleasure,
This is the ultimate.

The Sun
climbs aboard his fantastic chariot,
flies across the sky,
and lights up all the world.

The Earth
raises up his mighty arms,
bears the load,
holds up all mankind.

And so is the way of those great beings
who wish nothing for themselves,

Their lives devoted
to a single song:
the well-being and the happiness
of every living thing.

From A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, from Chapter 1,
The Benefits of the Awakening Mind, by Shantideva

Just as a flash of lightning on a dark, cloudy night
For an instant brightly illuminates all,
Likewise in this world, through the might of Buddha,
A wholesome thought rarely and briefly appears.

Hence virtue is perpetually feeble,
The great strength of evil being extremely intense,
And except for a Fully Awakening Mind
By what other virtue will it be overcome?

If even the thought to relieve
Living creatures of merely a headache
Is a beneficial intention
Endowed with infinite goodness,

Then what need is there to mention
The wish to dispel their inconceivable misery,
Wishing every single one of them
To realize boundless good qualities?

How can I fathom the depths
Of the goodness of this jewel of the mind,
The panacea that relieves the world of pain
And is the source of all its joy?

If merely a benevolent intention
Excels venerating the Buddhas,
Then what need to mention striving to make

All beings without exception happy?

Although wishing to be rid of misery,
They run towards misery itself.
Although wishing to have happiness,
Like an enemy they ignorantly destroy it.

For those who are deprived of happiness
And burdened with many sorrows
It satisfies them with all joy,
Dispels all suffering,

And clears away confusion.
Where is there a comparable virtue?
Where is there even such a friend?
Where is there merit similar to this?

If whoever repays a kind deed
Is worthy of some praise,
Then what need to mention the Bodhisattva
Who does good without its being asked of
him?

The world honors as virtuous
A man who sometimes gives a little plain food
Disrespectfully to a few beings,
That satisfies them for only half a day.

What need be said then of one
who, eternally bestows the peerless bliss of
the Sugatas
Upon limitless numbers of beings,
Thereby fulfilling all their hopes?

The Buddha has said that whoever bears an
evil thought

Against a benefactor such as that Bodhisattva
Will remain in hell for as many aeons
As there were evil thoughts.

But if a virtuous attitude should arise (in that
regard).
Its fruits will multiply far more than that.
When Bodhisattvas greatly suffer they
generate no negativity,
Instead their virtues naturally increase.

I bow down to the body of him
In whom the sacred precious mind is born.
I seek refuge in that source of joy
Who brings to happiness even those who
harm him.

Making Space with Bodhicitta, by Lama Yeshe

Bodhicitta is the essential, universal truth.

This most pure thought is the wish and the will to bring all sentient beings to the realisation of their highest potential, enlightenment.

The Bodhisattva sees the crystal nature that exists in each of us, and by recognising the beauty of our human potential, always has respect.

For the disrespectful mind, human beings are like grass, something to be used. "Ah, he means nothing to me. Human beings are nothing to me."

We all try to take advantage of someone else, to profit only for ourselves. The entire world is built on attachment. Big countries overwhelm small countries, big children take candy from small children, husbands take advantage of their wives. I make friends with someone because he can benefit me. It is the same with the rest of the world. Boyfriends, girlfriends. Everybody wants something.

The desire to make friends only for the other person's benefit is extremely rare; however, it is very worthwhile. Buddha explained that even one moment's thought of this mind dedicated to enlightenment for the sake of others can destroy a hundred thousand lifetimes' negative karma.

We have attachment that makes us tight and uncomfortable. But even a tiny spark of bodhicitta's heat makes the heart warm and relaxed.

Bodhicitta is the powerful solution, the atomic energy that destroys the kingdom of attachment.

Bodhicitta is not emotional love. By understanding the relative nature of sentient beings and seeing their highest destination, and by developing the willingness to bring all beings to that state of enlightenment, the mind is filled with love born from wisdom, not emotion.

Bodhicitta is not partial. Wherever you go with bodhicitta if you meet people, rich people or poor people, black or white, you are comfortable and you can communicate.

We have a fixed idea; life is this way or that. "This is good. This is bad." We do not understand the different aspects of the human condition. But, having this incredible universal thought, our narrow mind vanishes automatically. It is so simple; you have space and life becomes easier.

For example, someone looks at us, at our home, at our garden and we freak out. We are so insecure and tight in our hearts. Arrogant. "Don't look at me." But with bodhicitta there is space. When someone looks we can say, "Hmm. She's looking. But that's O.K." Do you understand? Rather than feeling upset you know it is all right.

Bodhicitta is the intoxicant that numbs us against pain and fills us with bliss.

Bodhicitta is the alchemy that transforms every action into benefit for others.

Bodhicitta is the cloud that carries the rain of positive energy to nourish growing things.

Bodhicitta is not doctrine. It is a state of mind. This inner experience is completely individual. So how can we see who is a Bodhisattva and who is not? can we see the self-cherishing mind?

If we feel insecure ourselves we will project that negative feeling onto others. We need the pure innermost thought of bodhicitta; wherever we go that will take care of us.

Stabilizing in the Bodhimind, by Shantideva

In the spiritual energy that relieves
The anguish of beings in misery and
Places depressed beings in eternal joy,
I lift up my heart and rejoice.

In the goodness producing illumination
I lift up my heart and rejoice.

I rejoice in the beings who have gained
Eternal liberation from suffering,
And I rejoice in those attained to Buddhahood
As well as in their offspring, the noble Bodhisattvas.

In the ocean-like virtue of the bodhimind
That brings joy to all beings
And in accomplishing the well-being of others,
I lift up my heart and rejoice.

To the Buddhas of the ten directions
I join my hands in respect.
Let blaze the light of Dharma's truth
For the beings lost in darkness.

To the Buddhas considering parinirvana
I join my hands in prayer.
Do not abandon the beings in sorrow
But remain and teach for countless ages.

May any spiritual energy thus generated
By my devotion to the enlightened ones
Be dedicated to dispelling the misery
Of living beings without exception.

As long as diseases afflict living beings
May I be the doctor, the medicine
And also the nurse
Who restores them to health.
May I fall as rain to increase
The harvests that must feed the living beings
And in ages of dire famine
May I myself serve as food and drink.

May I be a treasury
For those desperate and forlorn.
May I manifest as what they require
And wish to have near them.

My body, every possession
And all goodness, past, present and future
Without remorse I dedicate
To the well-being of the world.

Suffering is transcended by total surrender
And the mind attains to nirvana.
As one day all must be given up,
Why not dedicate it now to universal happiness?

My bodily powers I dedicate
To the well-being of all that lives.
Should anyone wish to ridicule me
And make me an object of jest and scorn,
Why should I possibly care
If I have dedicated myself to others?

Let them do as they wish with me,
So long as it does not harm them.
May no one who encounters me
Ever have an insignificant contact.

Regardless of whether those whom I meet
Respond toward me with anger or faith,
May the mere fact of our meeting
Contribute to the fulfillment of their wishes.

May the slander, harm
And all forms of abuse
That anyone should direct toward me
Act as a cause of their enlightenment.

May I be a protector of the helpless,
A guide to those traveling the path,
A boat to those wishing to cross over;
Or a bridge or a raft.

May I be land for those requiring it,
A lamp for those in darkness,
May I be a home for the homeless,
And a servant to the world.

In order to fulfill the needs of beings
May I be as a magic gem,
An inexhaustible vase, a mystic spell,
A cure-all medicine and a wish-granting tree.

May I act as the mighty earth
Or like the free and open skies
To support and provide the space
Whereby I and all others may grow.

Until every being afflicted by pain
Has reached to nirvana's shores,
May I serve only as a condition
That encourages progress and joy.

Just as all previous Buddhas
First gave rise to the precious bodhimind
And just as they then carefully followed
The stages of the Bodhisattva disciplines,

Likewise for the sake of living beings
Do I now myself generate the bodhimind,
And likewise will I myself train
In the disciplines of a Bodhisattva.

(Do these two verses three times)

They who out of wisdom
Have seized the supreme bodhimind
Praise, glorify and rejoice in it,
That it may grow to fulfillment.

From today I will reap the fruit of life;
Having well won the state of man,
Today I am born in the Buddha-family
And am now a child of the Buddhas.

Thus in the future I should make every effort
To live in accord with the Bodhisattva Ways,
And never should I act as would bring shame
To this noble, faultless family.

Like a blind man fumbling in garbage
Who happens to find a rare and precious gem,
Likewise have I discovered
The jewel of the precious bodhimind.

Thus was found this supreme ambrosia to dispel
The Lord of Death, destroyer of life;
An inexhaustible treasure able to cure
The poverty of all sentient beings.

It is the highest of medicines
To quell the ills of the living,
And it is a tree giving shade
To those wandering on the paths of life.

It is a strong and mighty bridge
By which beings can cross from misery,
And it is a moon to shine in the mind
To clear away the pains of delusion.

The bodhimind is a great radiant sun
To disperse the darkness of unknowing,
And it is the very essence of butters
Gained from churning the milks of Dharma.

For all guests on the roads of life
Who would taste the very substance of joy,
Here is the actual seat of true happiness,
A veritable feast to satiate the world.

Thus today in the presence of all Awakened Ones
I invite every living being to this festival
Giving both immediate and lasting joy.
May the gods and all others rejoice.

From 'A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, by Shantideva

May I be a guard for those who are protectorless,
A guide for those who journey on the road;
For those who wish to go across the water,
May I be a boat, a raft, or a bridge.

May I be an isle for those who yearn for landfall,
And a lamp for those who long for light ;
For those who need a resting place, a bed;
For all who need a servant, may I be a slave.

May I be the wishing jewel, the vase of plenty,
A word of power, and the supreme remedy.
May I be the tree of miracles,
And for every being, the abundant cow.

Like the great earth and the other elements,
Enduring as the sky itself endures,
For the boundless multitude of living beings,
May I be the ground and vessel of their life.

Thus, for every single thing that lives
In number like the boundless reaches of the sky,
May I be their sustenance and nourishment
Until they pass beyond the bounds of suffering.

The Excellence of Meditation upon the Bodhimind, by The Seventh Dalai Lama

Honor to Buddha, the supreme sage,
the cosmic overlord who awakens
all beings from drunken ignorance
by manifesting the hundredfold light
of truth's brilliant door.

Even should the earth be covered
with a layer of lesser jewels,
their radiance would be far surpassed
by one fragment of a sparkling diamond;
similarly does one with bodhimind
outshine Hinayana followers.

Of this thing called bodhimind,
source of all spiritual qualities,
the supremely significant,
the psyche of a High One,
the force producing all Buddhas,
I now sing this praise.

The expanded mind which thinks
only of that which benefits others
is a tree of endless fruit;
one touch of its divine sap
quenches even the word 'suffering'.

Merely looking at hunger and deprivation
turns one's stomach with horror;
bodhimind is the only medicine able to cure
all forms of need;
just as the naga king's jewel
fulfills the wants of even hungry ghosts.

Animal passion which clouds the mind,
animal stupidity blind to spiritual potential:
the one sun to dispel them
is bodhimind, torch of infinite rays.

For destitute beggars at the door
of the treasury of higher delights,
bodhimind is the gatekeeper;
and he fulfills mundane needs as well.

Only bodhimind, the thought
to be a Buddha,
totally purges the ugliest of sins –
sins which result in suffering,
a fraction of which would break a man.

It is a magic thing
to destroy misery now and forever,
a fabled potion to open
the passage of a mother in labor.

The sole thought on everyone's side,
the precious mind aiming at enlightenment
as a way to further the world,
was seen by Buddha to be
the highest of spiritual means.

For the sake of both yourself and others,
plant the fertile seed of bodhimind,
which quickly produces the state of Buddha,
freedom from every limitation;
and make it firm as a mountain.

Buddha said, 'By cultivating the seeds of bodhimind
all spiritual qualities are born;'
those who have developed it
He called kings of doctors.

It can be read in both the sutras and shastras
that the bodhimind is the door to the Mahayana,
and that the supreme practitioner who attains it
becomes a Bodhisattva, a son of the Buddhas.

Whether or not one is a Bodhisattva
is decided by whether or not one has bodhimind;
he anointed with its sandalwood fragrance
is adorned with the richest of good qualities.

Even the eagle, king of birds, cannot fly
if he is missing a wing.
Many find the wing 'perception of emptiness'
but only those with the wing of bodhimind
fly to the omniscient state of Buddhahood.

Were the advantages of bodhimind to take form,
the universe could not contain them.
Generating it but for a moment produces
more goodness than offering
a world filled with the seven jewels
to the Buddhas of the ten directions.

This is but a drop from the ocean of the
beneficial effects of bodhimind,
all of which even Buddha could not describe.
Therefore wrap closely around your shoulders
the cloak of love and enthusiasm

for this one path all Buddhas have trod,
and become a living legend of one attained
to freedom and knowledge.

By virtue of this song
on the elixir which transforms gross beings
into beautiful, golden Buddhas,
may all living beings attain
to a state of expanded mind.

The colophon: A brief poem on a few of the beneficial effects of meditation upon the bodhimind, the gateway to the path of the Great Vehicle; written at the repeated request of the monks Lozang Dargye and Lozang Tashi, two hermits from T'sawa Zhan, by Gyalwa Kalzang Gyats'o while he was residing in the Riwo Trudzin Palace.

A Daily Prayer, from Advice from A Spiritual Friend

Homage to the awakening warrior,
the entirely good Samantabhadra.

Homage to the buddhas who have gone to bliss,
who possess an accumulation of immeasurable
precious excellent qualities,
who have uprooted every last poisoned tree
of moral failings
and who abide during the three times
throughout the ten directions.

Homage to the truth of dharma,
which opens the wisdom-eye of beings
throughout all three realms,
disperses the mist of unknowing
and is the means of extracting
the poisoned arrow of latent tendencies

Homage to the sons of those gone to bliss,
the sangha intent on virtue,
who do not revert to worldliness
and whose thoughts are motivated by
great compassion.
I bow my head to them all
who have opened the eye of their mind.

Whatever slight non-virtue I have committed
throughout my lifetimes or have induced
or rejoiced in, I lay bare
before the spiritual Conquerors
and pledge not to commit them again.

Without exception I rejoice in the virtue
accumulated by those gone to bliss,
the solitary realisers, hearers and conquerors' heirs,
and in other wholesome deeds of worldly beings.

No matter what non-virtues have been committed by those
creatures
who are confounded by the venom of emotional afflictions,
for their sake may I surely plunge by myself
gladly into the realms of hell.

Having satiated the world with the nectar
of peaceful delight,
may everyone's mind become active in virtue.
May I willingly take on myself
as much suffering as beings may have.

May perfect awakening itself be produced
soon in the minds of these beings.
May those who have generated the awakening mind
perfectly accomplish the accumulations for full awakening.

By accomplishing the accumulations of virtue
and attaining the spiritual levels,
by keeping to the family of protectors
of all three existences
and by annihilating the foes of evil,
may the abode of the great kingdom of truth
over the three worlds be attained.

No matter how many days there have been
since the fully awakened beings
have awakened themselves under the bodhi tree,

I beseech those who are living and abiding
from now onwards, to cause the incomparable
nectar of truth
to cascade upon living beings.

I entreat those nobly-minded ones
who have completed
their sublime activities for the sake of others,
and who are about to enter into
the supreme state beyond sorrow,
to remain for a long time
in order to benefit others.

However many sentient beings there are
wandering in the gloomy three worlds,
I shall invite them all as my guests
to enjoy the nectar of delight of extreme peace.

Thus, whatever virtue I have accumulated here
shall be dedicated for the perfect awakening.
Therefore, may I never be apart for even an instant
from the fully awakening mind.

Translated from the Tibetan by L.T. Doboorn and Brian Beresford.

A Prayer by His Holiness The Dalai Lama, from Ethics for a New Millennium

May I become, at all times, both now and forever,
a protector for those without a protector;
A guide for those who have lost their way;
A ship for those with oceans to cross;
and a sanctuary for those in danger;

May I be a lamp for those in need of light;
A refuge for those in need of shelter,
and a servant to all those in need.

Selections for Contemplation

I live in this world
of joy, and sorrow

of comfort and ease,
and of struggle, and pain

of friendship, and community
and of loneliness and isolation

I live in this world of riches and poverty

where there is health
and illness

Where some people can only try to care for themselves,
while others are at the point where more and more they have thinking about
and caring for others as the aim of their life

There are people serving others in this world -
there are people taking joy in that

I live in this world
where many are in need of a protector,
where many are in need of an advocate

where many people do not have even a basic education...

Today, in this world, there are many who are kept back from doing good
things because of some illness

Today there are many who are broken-hearted
Today there are many who have been hurt in relationships

Every day in this world there are people experiencing pain:
children, teenagers, adults, the middle-aged, the elderly;
those who are alone, those with problems of the mind

I live in this world where many people are in need of some form of human
contact,

I live in this world where many people suffer from depression,
where many people are blocked by depression

I live in this world where many people are experiencing
the absence of love

I live in this world where many people use drugs,
or drink, or sex to escape
where many people overeat

where many are without peace,
without control, without any freedom of mind

Right now, there are people being trapped by their addictions, overwhelmed
by their delusions,
lost

I live in this world where someone is in danger of falling,
where someone is in danger of slipping - and the result can be severe for
them...

There are many people in need of strength
light, and peace

I live in this world where people experience misfortune, accidents and are burdened by regret or are blocked by regret, doubts, recriminations...

I live in this world where many people are lonely, or numb, self-absorbed, superficial, or greedy, distracted, afraid, or sad, where there are those who are feeling ugly, or feeling hopeless

I live in this world where most people are without any sense of the sacred dimension in life

I live in this world where the deluded the band together and increase ignorance and suffering

I live in this world where there are many people's experience is only that of a lower-realm being (the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, the animal realm)

Every day in this world there are people with no perspective on their life, dissatisfied, indulgent

I live in this world where people don't think about death

Every day there are people wasting time, not seeing what they have, not taking advantage of all the opportunities they have while they still can

I live in this world where the vast majority of people are completely without any Dharma

(Dharma: Buddhist teaching, or religious teaching; the result of Buddhist practice or religious practice; and true medicine for the ills of the world)

I live in this world where few people have received instructions in meditation, and, of these, most are still unclear about the essential points

I live in this world, where, though we may do some good,
though we may improve our lives,
those few who *have* listened to teachings, *and understood*,
many times don't practice

and, of those who do practice, often they are not able
to overcome the obstacles to meditation,
and practice in a way that they progress...

I live in this world where even those people who have received, and
practiced, and accomplished a great deal of Dharma still suffer
they still fall into experiences that are like the lower realms

and I live in this world where some of the people who have become stable in
realization don't share the Dharma as much as they could

I live in this world where though we can help others
too often we don't

where though can remove others suffering and give them happiness, too
often we don't

I live in this world
where people don't live in the present
Where people don't know their own worth, or the worth of others,
where people don't know their own potential...

Tonglen Practice - from The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, by Sogyal Rinpoche

How to Awaken Love and Compassion

Before you can truly practice Tonglen, you have to be able to evoke compassion in yourself. That is harder than we often imagine, because the sources of our love and compassion are sometimes hidden from us, and we may have no ready access to them. Fortunately there are several techniques that the Buddhist "training of the mind" in compassion has developed to help us evoke our own hidden love. Out of the enormous range of methods available, I have selected the following ones, and have ordered them in a particular way so as to be of the greatest possible use to people in the modern world.

1. Loving Kindness: Unsealing the Spring

When we believe that we don't have enough love in us, there is a method for discovering and invoking it. Go back in your mind and recreate, almost visualize, a love that someone gave you that really moved you, perhaps in your childhood. Traditionally you are taught to think of your mother and her lifelong devotion to you, but if you find that problematic, you could think of your grandmother or grandfather, or anyone who had been deeply kind to you in your life. Remember a particular instance when they really showed you love, and you felt their love vividly.

Now let that feeling arise again in your heart, and infuse you with gratitude. As you do so, your love will go out naturally to that person who evoked it. You will remember then that even though you may not always feel that you have been loved enough, you were loved genuinely once. Knowing that now will make you feel again that you are, as that person made you feel then, worthy of love and really lovable.

Let your heart open now, and let love flow from it; then extend this love to all beings. Begin with those who are closest to you, then extend your love to friends and to acquaintances, then to neighbors, to strangers, then even to those whom you don't like or have difficulties with, even those whom you might consider as your "enemies," and finally to the whole universe. Let this love become more and more boundless. Equanimity is one of the four essential facets, with loving kindness, compassion, and joy, of what the teachings say form the entire aspiration of compassion. The all-inclusive, unbiased view of equanimity is really the starting point and the basis of the path of compassion.

You will find that this practice unseals a spring of love, and by that unsealing in you of your own loving kindness, you will find that it will inspire the birth of compassion. For as Maitreya said in one of the teachings he gave Asanga: "The water of compassion courses through the canal of loving kindness."

2. Compassion: Considering Yourself the Same as Others

One powerful way to evoke compassion is to think of others as exactly the same as you. "After all," the Dalai Lama explains, "all human beings are the same--made of human flesh, bones, and blood. We all want happiness and want to avoid suffering. Further, we have an equal right to be happy. In other words, it is important to realize our sameness as human beings."

Say, for example, you are having difficulties with a loved one, such as your mother or father, husband or wife, lover or friend. How helpful and revealing it can be to consider the other person not in his or her "role" of mother or father or husband, but simply as another "you," another human being, with the same feelings as you, the same desire for happiness, the same fear of suffering. Thinking of the person as a real person, exactly the same as you, will open your heart to him or her and give you more insight into how to help.

If you consider others just the same as yourself, it will help you to open up your relationships and give them a new and richer meaning. Imagine if societies and nations began to view each other in the same way; at last we would have the beginnings of a solid basis for peace on earth and the happy coexistence of all peoples.

3. Compassion: Exchanging Yourself for Others

When someone is suffering and you find yourself at a loss to know how to help, put yourself unflinchingly in his or her place. Imagine as vividly as possible what you would be going through if you were suffering the same pain. Ask yourself: "How would I feel? How would I want my friends to treat me? What would I most want from them?"

When you exchange yourself for others in this way, you are directly transferring your cherishing from its usual object, yourself, to other beings. So exchanging yourself for others is a very powerful way of loosening the hold on you of the self-cherishing and the self-grasping of ego, and so of releasing the heart of your compassion.

4. Using a Friend to Generate Compassion

Another moving technique for arousing compassion for a person who is suffering is to imagine one of your dearest friends, or someone you really love, in that person's place.

Imagine your brother or daughter or parent or best friend in the same kind of painful situation. Quite naturally your heart will open, and compassion will awaken in you. What more would you want than to free them from their torment? Now take this compassion released in your heart and transfer it to the person who needs your help: You will find that your help is inspired more naturally, and that you can direct it more easily.

People sometimes ask: "If I do this, will the friend or relative whom I am imagining in pain come to some harm?" On the contrary, thinking about them with such love and compassion can only be of help to them, and will even bring about the healing of whatever suffering and pain they may have gone through in the past, may be going through now, or have yet to go through.

For the fact that they are the instrument of your arousing compassion, even if it is only for an instant, will bring them tremendous merit and benefit. Because they have been responsible, in part, for the opening of your heart, and for allowing you to help the sick or dying person with your compassion, then the merit from that action will naturally return to them.

You can also mentally dedicate the merit of that action to your friend or relative who helped you to open your heart. And you can wish the person well, and pray that in the future he or she will be free of suffering. You will be grateful toward your friend, and your friend might feel inspired and grateful too, if you tell the person that he or she helped you to evoke your compassion.

5. How to Meditate on Compassion

The simplest ways are the best and the most direct. Every day, life gives us innumerable chances to open our hearts, if we can only take them. An old woman passes you with a sad and lonely face, swollen veins on her legs, and two heavy plastic bags full of shopping she can hardly carry; a shabbily dressed old man shuffles in front of you in line at the post office; a boy on crutches looks harried and anxious as he tries to cross the street in the afternoon traffic; a dog lies bleeding to death on the road; a young girl sits alone, sobbing hysterically in the subway. Switch on a television, and there on the news perhaps is a mother in Beirut kneeling above the body of her murdered son; or an old grandmother in Moscow pointing to the soup that is her food for today, not knowing if she'll have even that tomorrow; or one of the AIDS children in Romania staring out at you with eyes drained of any living expression.

Any one of these sights could open the eyes of your heart to the fact of vast suffering in the world. Let it. Don't waste the love and grief it arouses; in the moment you feel compassion welling up in you, don't brush it aside, don't shrug it off and try quickly to return to "normal," don't be afraid of your feeling or embarrassed by it, or allow yourself to be distracted from it or let it run aground in apathy. Be vulnerable; use that quick, bright uprush of compassion; focus on it, go deep in your heart and meditate on it, develop it, enhance, and deepen it. By doing this you will realize how blind you have been to suffering, how the pain that you are experiencing or seeing now is only a tiny fraction of the pain of the world.

All beings, everywhere, suffer; let your heart go out to them all in spontaneous and immeasurable compassion, and direct that compassion, along with the blessing of all the Buddhas, to the alleviation of suffering everywhere.

Compassion is a far greater and nobler thing than pity. Pity has its roots in fear, and a sense of arrogance and condescension, sometimes even a smug feeling of "I'm glad it's not me." As Stephen Levine says: "When your fear touches someone's pain it becomes pity; when your love touches someone's pain, it becomes compassion." To train in compassion, then, is to know all beings are the same and suffer in similar ways, to honor all those who suffer, and to know you are neither separate from nor superior to anyone.

So your first response on seeing someone suffer becomes not mere pity, but deep compassion. You feel for that person respect and even gratitude, because you now know that whoever prompts you to develop compassion by their suffering is in fact giving you one of the greatest gifts of all, because they are helping you to develop that very quality you need most in your progress towards enlightenment. That is why we say in Tibet that the beggar who is asking you for money, or the sick old woman wringing your heart, may be the buddhas in disguise, manifesting on your path to help you grow in compassion and so move towards buddhahood.

6. How to Direct Your Compassion

When you meditate deeply enough on compassion, there will arise in you a strong determination to alleviate the suffering of all beings, and an acute sense of responsibility toward that noble aim. There are two ways, then, of mentally directing this compassion and making it active.

The first way is to pray to all the buddhas and enlightened beings, from the depths of your heart, that everything you do, all your thoughts, words, and deeds, should only benefit beings and bring them happiness. In the words of one great prayer: "Bless me into usefulness." Pray that you benefit all who come in contact with you, and help them transform their suffering and their lives.

The second and universal way is to direct whatever compassion you have to all beings, by dedicating all your positive actions and spiritual practice to their welfare and especially toward their enlightenment. For when you meditate deeply on compassion, a realization dawns in you that the only way for you to be of **complete** help to other beings is for you to gain enlightenment. From that a strong sense of determination and universal responsibility is born, and the compassionate wish arises in you at that moment to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all others.

This compassionate wish is called Bodhicitta in Sanskrit; **bodhi** means our enlightened essence, and **citta** means heart. So we could translate it as "the heart of our enlightened mind." To awaken and develop the heart of the enlightened mind is to ripen steadily the seed of our buddha nature, that seed that in the end, when our practice of compassion has become perfect and all-embracing, will flower majestically into buddhahood. Bodhicitta, then, is the spring and source and root of the entire spiritual path.

The Preliminary Tonglen Practice

The best way to do this practice, and any practice of Tonglen, is to begin by evoking and resting in the nature of mind. When you rest in the nature of

mind and see all things directly as "empty," illusory, and dream-like, you are resting in the state of what is known as "ultimate" or "absolute Bodhicitta," the true heart of the enlightened mind. The teachings compare absolute Bodhicitta to an inexhaustible treasury of generosity; and compassion, when understood in its profoundest sense, is known and seen as the natural radiance of the nature of mind, the skillful means that rises from the heart of wisdom.

Begin by sitting and bringing the mind home. Allow all your thoughts to settle, neither inviting them nor following them. Close your eyes if you wish. When you feel really calm and centered, alert yourself slightly, and begin the practice.

1. Environmental Tonglen

We all know how the moods and atmospheres of our mind have a great hold on us. Sit with your mind and feel its mood and atmosphere. If you feel your mood is uneasy, or the atmosphere is dark, then as you breathe in, mentally absorb whatever is unwholesome; and as you breathe out, mentally give out calm, clarity, and joy, so purifying and healing the atmosphere and environment of your mind. This is why I call this first stage of the practice "environmental Tonglen."

2. Self Esteem

For the purposes of this exercise, divide yourself into two aspects, **A** and **B**. **A** is the aspect of you that is whole, compassionate, warm, and loving, like a true friend, really willing to be there for you, responsive and open to you, without ever judging you, whatever your faults or shortcomings. **B** is the aspect of you that has been hurt, that feels misunderstood and frustrated, bitter or angry, who might have been, for example, unjustly treated or abused as a child, or has suffered in relationships or been wronged by society.

Now as you breathe in, imagine that **A** opens his or her heart completely, and warmly and compassionately accepts and embraces all of **B**'s suffering and negativity and pain and hurt. Moved by this, **B** opens his or her heart and all pain and suffering melt away in this compassionate embrace.

As you breathe out, imagine **A** sending out to **B** all his or her healing love, warmth, trust, comfort, confidence, happiness, and joy.

3. Tonglen in a Living Situation

Imagine vividly a situation where you have acted badly, one about which you feel guilty, and which you wince to even think about. Then, as you breathe in, accept total responsibility for your actions in that particular situation, without in any way trying to justify your behavior. Acknowledge exactly what you have done wrong, and wholeheartedly ask for forgiveness. Now, as you breathe out, send out reconciliation, forgiveness, healing, and understanding.

So you breathe in blame, and breathe out the undoing of harm; you breathe in responsibility, breathe out healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This exercise is particularly powerful, and may give you the courage to go to see the person whom you have wronged, and the strength and willingness to talk to them directly and actually ask for forgiveness from the depths of your heart.

4. Tonglen for Others

Imagine someone to whom you feel very close, particularly someone who is suffering and in pain. As you breathe in, imagine you take in all their suffering and pain with compassion, and as you breathe out, send your warmth, healing, love, joy, and happiness streaming out to them.

Now, just as in the practice of loving kindness, gradually widen the circle of your compassion to embrace first other people whom you also feel very

close to, then those whom you feel indifferent about, then those you dislike or have difficulty with, then even those whom you feel are actively monstrous and cruel. Allow your compassion to become universal, and to fold in its embrace all sentient beings, all beings, in fact, without any exception:

Sentient beings are as limitless as the whole of space.
May they each effortlessly realize the nature of their mind,
And may every single being of all the six realms, who has each been in one life or another my father or mother,
Attain all together the ground of primordial perfection.

The Main Tonglen Practice

In the Tonglen practice of giving and receiving, we **take on, through compassion** all the various mental and physical sufferings of all beings: their fear, frustration, pain, anger, guilt, bitterness, doubt, and rage, and we **give them, through love**, all our happiness, and well-being, peace of mind, healing, and fulfillment.

1. Before you begin with this practice, sit quietly and bring your mind home. Then, making use of any of the exercises or methods I have described, whichever one you find really inspires you and works for you, meditate deeply on compassion. Summon and invoke the presence of all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and enlightened beings, so that, through their inspiration and blessing, compassion may be born in your heart.

2. Imagine in front of you, as vividly and poignantly as possible, someone you care for who is suffering. Try and imagine every aspect of the person's pain and distress. Then, as you feel your heart opening in compassion toward the person, imagine that all of his or her sufferings manifest together and gather into a great mass of hot, black, grimy smoke.

3. Now, as you breathe in, visualize that this mass of black smoke dissolves, with your in-breath, into the very core of your self-grasping at your heart. There it destroys completely all traces of self-cherishing, thereby purifying all your negative karma.

4. Imagine, now that your self-cherishing has been destroyed, that the heart of your enlightened mind, your Bodhicitta, is fully revealed. As you breathe out, then, imagine that you are sending out its brilliance, cooling light of peace, joy, happiness, and ultimate well-being to your friend in pain, and that its rays are purifying all their negative karma.

Here I find it inspiring to imagine, as Shantideva suggests, that your Bodhicitta has transformed your heart, or your whole body and being itself, into a dazzling, wish-fulfilling jewel, a jewel that can grant the desires and wishes of anyone, and provide exactly what he or she longs for and needs. True compassion **is** the wish-fulfilling jewel because it has the inherent power to give precisely to each being whatever that being most needs, and so alleviate his or her suffering, and bring about his or her true fulfillment.

5. So at the moment the light of your Buddha streams out to touch your friend in pain, it is essential to feel a firm conviction that all of his or her negative karma **has** been purified, and a deep, lasting joy that he or she has been totally freed of suffering and pain.

Then, as you go on breathing normally, in and out, continue steadily with this practice.

Practicing Tonglen on one friend in pain helps you to begin the process of gradually widening the circle of compassion to take on the suffering and purify the karma of all beings, and to give them all your happiness, well-being, joy, and peace of mind. This is the wonderful goal of Tonglen practice, and in a larger sense, of the whole path of compassion.

From “Ultimate Healing” - by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

On ‘Taking and Giving’ -

Taking

To do the actual practice of exchanging self for others, first generate compassion by thinking of how living beings constantly experience suffering even though they have no wish to do so, because they are ignorant of its causes, or because, although they know the causes of suffering, they are too lazy to abandon them.

Think: “How wonderful it would be if all living beings could be free from all suffering and the causes of suffering, karma and delusions.” Then generate great compassion by thinking, “I myself will free them from all their suffering and its causes.”

You then relate the meditation to your breathing. As you breathe in, imagine that you take in all the suffering and causes of suffering of other living beings through your nostrils in the form of black smoke. If you have an illness or some other problem, focus first on all the numberless other beings with that same problem, then think of all the other problems experienced by living beings, as well as their causes.

As you slowly breathe in the black smoke, take in all this suffering and its causes. Like plucking a thorn out of their flesh, you immediately free all the numberless living beings from all their suffering.

Next, take all the subtle obscurations from the arhats and higher bodhisattvas. There is nothing to take from the gurus and Buddhas; all you can do is make offerings to them.

The black smoke comes in through your nostrils and absorbs into the self-cherishing thought in your heart, completely destroying it.

Your self-cherishing, the creator of all your problems, becomes non-existent. Like aiming a missile right on target, aim right at your self-cherishing thought, the target in this meditation.

Self-cherishing is based on the ignorance that holds to the concept of a truly existent I. Even though no truly existent I exists, we cherish this false I and regard it as the most precious and most important among all beings.

At the same time as your self-cherishing becomes completely non-existent, the false I that ignorance holds to be truly existent also becomes completely empty, as it is empty in reality. Meditate for as long as possible on this emptiness, the ultimate nature of the I.

Meditating on emptiness in this way brings powerful purification, purifying the actual cause of disease, which is the best way to cure disease.

To do this meditation more elaborately, you can take from others all the undesirable environments that they experience. Breathe in through your nostrils in the form of black smoke all the undesirable places that sentient beings experience. For example, imagine that you are breathing in the red-hot burning ground of the hot hells, the ice of the cold hells, the inhospitable environments of the hungry ghosts and animals, and the dirty places of human beings.

The black smoke comes in through your nostrils and down to your heart, where it absorbs into your self-cherishing thought and completely destroys it. Your self-cherishing becomes non-existent. Even the object that your self-cherishing treasures, the real I that appears to exist from its own side, becomes completely empty.

By performing the meditation on taking in this way, we combine the practice of conventional bodhicitta, the altruistic thought to achieve enlightenment, with the practice of absolute bodhicitta, the direct perception of emptiness.

Giving

Next, generate loving kindness by thinking that even though living beings want to be happy, they lack happiness because they are ignorant of its causes, or lazy in creating them. And even if they achieve temporary happiness, they still lack the ultimate happiness of full enlightenment. Think: “How wonderful it would be if all living beings had happiness and the causes of happiness.” Then generate great loving kindness by thinking: “I myself will bring them happiness and its causes.”

Visualize your body as a wish-granting jewel, which can grant all the wishes of living beings. Then give everything you have to every living being. Give all your good karma of the three times and all the happiness that results from it up to enlightenment, your possessions, your family and friends, and your body, visualized as a wish-granting jewel. Also make offerings to all the enlightened beings.

Living beings receive everything that they want, including all the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Those who want a friend, find a friend; those who want a guru, find a perfect guru; those who want a job, find a job; those who want a doctor, find a qualified doctor; those who want medicine, find medicine. For those with incurable diseases, you become the medicine that cures them.

Since the main human problem is difficulty in finding the means of living, imagine that each human being is showered with millions of dollars from your body, which is a wish-granting jewel. You can also think that the environment becomes a pure land - the pure land of Amitabha or the Buddha of Compassion, for example.

You grant all human beings everything they want, including a pure land with perfect enjoyments. All these enjoyments cause them only to generate the path to enlightenment within their mind, and they all become enlightened.

In a similar way, give the worldly gods, the asuras and suras, everything they need, such as protective armor.

They all also then become enlightened.

When you do the practice of giving to all the hell beings, you can completely transform their environment into a blissful pure land, with perfect enjoyments and no suffering at all. Visualize the hells as pure realms, as beautiful as possible. All the iron houses of the hell beings, which are one with fire, become jewel palaces and mandalas. All the hell beings receive everything they want and then become enlightened.

Do the same for the hungry ghosts. Transform their environment into a pure realm and give them thousands of different foods that all taste like nectar. The hungry ghosts receive everything they need, but the ultimate point is that they all become enlightened.

Since animals mainly need protection, manifest as Vajrapani or another wrathful deity to protect them from being attacked by other animals. They receive everything they want, and everything they receive becomes the cause for them to actualize the path and become enlightened.

Give also to the arhats and bodhisattvas. Give them whatever realizations they need to complete the path to enlightenment.

Taking and Giving Prayer

May the thought of others suffering and need
completely destroy my self-centeredness

and may I set in motion and maintain the causes
for people to be free from suffering

like a vacuum
or like a magnet, completely removing the suffering that people experience

(‘like removing a thorn from flesh, ‘)

like a cooling rain, a balm,
or a warm sun if that’s what’s needed
completely dispelling suffering

like a great rain washing away sorrow
music
light
water, food and drink

or like the sun, destroyer of sorrow,

a great wind,
a swift river,
a laser,
medicine clearing the way,
friendship arriving when its needed most

all of one meaning

and, in a single moment, may I set in motion and maintain the causes for
people to be richly blessed, in every way

May they have every happiness

I pray that whatever hardships I have experienced or know about, whatever
lack, may others not experience those

I pray they will have it easier than I've had

May they not experience any privation or difficulty-
not even the slightest

And I pray that whatever good things I have known in this life, or even just
heard about, may they all experience these, and more,
knowing the love of teachers, family and friends...

May the force of goodness increase in me

Nine Short Prayers

May I become sure medicine for every pain.

May the force of caring
increase in me

May my thoughts be healing
May my words be healing
May my actions be healing
May my breath be healing
May my look be healing
May my touch be healing

May I hold as my delight
the removing of suffering of living beings
and giving them happiness

May I dedicate myself to others

May I increase my ability to help others.

May virtue increase

May whatever is good within me increase

May that which is beneficial within me increase

This is what bodhicitta does

At once: with one state of mind:

Comfort the lonely
ease the pain of the sick
heal
clear away confusion
teach
nourish, strengthen
assist in the awakening of inspiration,
clear, fresh energy

give joy
create harmony
assure safety and health into the future time
for all

actually produce from the body this substance
‘one touch of its divine sap quenches even the word ‘suffering’’

take away anger, fear
give calm,
strengthen constitutions

give life
help good things to grow, to flower

remove obstacles

proclaim universal integrity and equality

remove poverty at once and give riches

rise up, lift up, give hope

remove feelings of illness, and give health

remove feelings of numbness and give joyous feeling, awakened

teach without words

and with words

you are *this*

you are *also* this

you are much more **this**

than what you believed yourself to be

universal light

accomplishing all purposes

instantly transforming a hell

into a pure land

transforming danger to safety

accomplishing all good things

Twenty-Two Illustrations of the Mind of Enlightenment, by Haribhadra

“The mind of enlightenment is like the earth, gold, the moon, fire, treasure, a jewel mine, the ocean, a vajra, the king of mountains, medicine, a guru, a wish fulfilling jewel, the sun, a song, a king, a treasure house, a highway, a horse, a spring, a sweet sound, a river and a cloud”

From Ornament of Insight by Asanga

A mind that seeks to become enlightened
for the sake of others is a mind of enlightenment .

Like the mighty earth a foundation of all that is good,
like gold never changing,
like the waxing moon it grows in purity,
like a raging fire burning away all hindrance to the true perfection of
wisdom,
like a never-ending treasure satisfying all,
like a jewel mine the source of many a precious quality,
like the mighty ocean untroubled by misfortune,
like the vajra it will not crack, it will not split,
like the mountain never moved by distraction,
like powerful medicine curing the ills of delusion,
like a true guru never forsaking any living being,
like the wish fulfilling jewel fulfilling all desire,
like the sun ripening our minds,
like the sweetest song filling hearts with inspiration,
like a king supremely powerful in helping others,
like a treasure house holding great stores of virtue,
like a great highway travelled by all great beings,
like good horse moving effortlessly between the ditches of samsara and
nirvana,
like an eternal spring holding all teachings heard and unheard,

like music to the ears of those who seek freedom,
like an ever flowing river ceaselessly working for others,
like a rain cloud whose rain of teaching falls everywhere,
this is the mind of enlightenment.

Three Bodhicitta Poems

at once
it is the sun and moon
the sun and the rain
that brings everything out beautifully

it's balm,
and nectar

it's food,
water,
and medicine

it is the embrace
of a mother
or a wife

the encouraging voice of an old friend,

there is no end to bodhicitta

it is a candle
a scripture,

it's clearing the ground to build a house,
or a library, or a school

clearing the path so we can walk
clearing away clouds so we can see

there's no end to this

it's poetry-
showing all good things

and it's hope restored,
mistakes forgotten,
gotten over, gotten past

it's freedom,
and welcoming arms to someone
learning to walk

it's the joy that speeds healing
and it's miracles in abundance

it is paradise itself
and it's every small, kind act
containing worlds

Tell me, Who can speak of this fully?
We all can

this is our birthright,
our very nature wanting to be born,
it's the sun of wisdom and compassion inseparable

drawing all things together
leaving nothing out
no one, no teaching,
no person or place or time

it is universal
and personal
our teacher
our very self
our Lord
and worthy of every praise

it is selfless prayer
wonder of wonders- actually praying itself
it is self existing - just like this...

this goes beyond
anything we can say about it
and yet, it's somehow still
always fully present

awakening, actualizing
from life, bringing forth life,
love itself
our true life

this essential sun
beyond words and the ground of all words
saying, if we were to put words to it,
aah, may all beings be happy...

and we all must find a way to speak,
to reply,

because of this
to say what's in us

how will we live?

this says
“dedicate yourself to the ultimate purpose of all beings”

and, “Don't waste time” “Everyday, every hour is precious”

this says, “here- sweeten your disposition”

and, “see time”,

and, “give yourself”

how will we reply?
how will we live?

just this- for me, this is the one point containing all

for me, this is the golden road, with heaven worlds all around
where all benefit, in some way

this, is the most satisfying path,
regardless of struggle, the most fulfilling
regardless of how hard it is to say, it’s the biggest joy,
the brightest joy

this is what is reliable
for me, the safe haven,
it is breath, it is sight...

for me, it is giving,
and knowing even now
the pleasure of having its gift received

this is love
and this will, purpose, of human life, lived to the fullest-
oh, many voices, many hearts celebrate this with me now

(What is bodhicitta?

Bodhicitta is our own true nature,
of wisdom and compassion inseparable...)

how to speak of this?

it’s the rain that nourishes growing things

it's the sun that makes everything flourish
it's the embrace of a mother,
or a wife,
melting troubles away

bodhicitta
it's like the encouraging voice of an old friend

it's selfless prayer, naturally
having a purpose past what we see now

it is a word, it is magic,
parting clouds so we can see,
or clearing a path
or building a house, or a library, or a school

this one source everywhere
becomes a hospital, and doctors, and medicine

in lost times, it is inspiration

this is pure light
this is warm touch
and it is clarity, and strength

it reaches over every ocean
over every rocky climb
through whatever barred gates
past any disbelieving mind
giving life

who can ever speak of this,
and what can compare to this?
there is no end, from what I can see
and all day, my heart sings that this is in me

What can compare to this?

it's like a hero,
calling captives out of their dungeon
it's like a fresh morning
after one was given up for dead
(astonishment! disbelief! and then, a great wave
moving through everything,
of praise, and generosity...)

it's like fragrance, or memory, or dream that speeds healing
it is a true word spoken when that's needed
it is direction, and food, and gifts appearing in our hands to give,
it is learning, and giving to match someone's need

it is song, universal language,
universal and for all times currency
and a true friend,
it's meeting our own true nature
what can compare to this?

so then, it is ethics, and wisdom,
meditation,
patience, and effort,
all, natural, and effortless in a way

it is all the forms created to express one intent
and, it is all the names given,
it is tradition and all our seeing past form and tradition

today I write this because it's the only thing I can think of that draws all
things to itself
the only thing I can think of that gives everything else some place in the
world

all the teachings, all the differences, all the wonder, all the pain

this- is the ultimate name the one thing most worth praising
this- is the activity of all buddhas,
the very nature of all heroes, and heroines,
angels and saviors

with my little notes at home, today, this is all I wanted to write

it's an elixir
reviving the dead

a teacher
filling your mind with great things

it's a compass

a key

or a lock when you need a lock

it's an oar when you need an oar

an umbrella when you need one

a net holding back poisonous creatures

a shield
first into battle

a word spoken
and not just any word
but just the word you need to hear,

a magic word...

it's encouragement
fresh life
inspiration to continue your journey
with wisdom,
with clear eyes
and with joy

it's food
it's big love...

this is music
and grace

and love's power

love pouring itself

it's the friendliness you meet
and it's food

it's simplicity itself-
good things
for now,
and for generations to come

everything contributes to the power of this practice

it can be like
the first rain after a blazing summer

or it can be like a lion's heart
a warrior who's never known fear...

it's setting things in order

it's saying your name
calling your name
(not like all the others-
your true name)

the graver the danger
the stronger the will to protect

the more something is worth
the greater the will to give

this is peace, and action, as one

moving worlds
not fading
giving to be given
awakened in teachers
to be awakened in me
the fullness of love, given
to be awakened in you
and on and on...

what words are there to express this...?

look!

this is you
this is for you

Prayers of Universal Aspiration

From: The Prayer of the Lord of Sutras Holy Golden Light

and

From: The Noble Vajra Banner of Victory Sutra

translated from Tibetan into English by Gelong Jampa Gendun with Getsul
Tenzin Chodak (edited)

All My Mothers – by Gelong Jampa Gendun, after Everyman and Rodger
Bacon

At the precious altar
of my mind's memory
of Lama Thubten Yeshe –
 a sun-flowering field
 of wisdom, love and cheer
 where my heart longs to run –
I humbly offer
these few fragrant petals of prayer.

May your moon-flower forever bloom;
Your flower children flourish
 in that wish-fulfilling field
 of wonder.

From: The Prayer of the Lord of Sutras Holy Golden Light

By the sound of the great drum
of the Holy Golden Light,
in these three worlds,
the three thousands of worlds,
May the sufferings of cruel migrations,
the sufferings of the Lord of Death's domain,
and the sufferings of privation be brought to an end.

By the thunder of that mighty drum
May all want in the world be ended,
and just as the Lords of Subduers are without fear,
their fears allayed,
so too may all sentient beings be without fear,
parted from their fears.
Just as the All-knowing Able Lords,
though dwelling within the cycles of existence,
possess all holy qualities,
so too may the meditative concentrations of all beings
possess the qualities of the Harmonies of Enlightenment
and may those qualities become oceans of qualities.

By the thunder of that mighty drum,
May all beings come to possess the voice of Brahma,
May they attain the most blessed Enlightenment of the Buddhas,
May they turn the virtuous Wheel of Doctrine,
May they live for unimaginable eons,
May they teach the way for the welfare of wanderers,
May they relieve suffering and destroy afflictions,
and may they extinguish desire, hatred and delusion.

May those beings who abide in places of tortured existence,
those whose bodies and bones are burning in flames of pain,

May they hear the beating of the drum
and may they cry, 'I bow to you, the Buddhas.'
May all beings remember their births
in hundreds of lives,
in thousands of lives,
in tens of millions of lives.
May they be ever mindful of the Lords of Sages
and may they heed their vast words.

By the thunder of that mighty drum
May all beings find constant companionship in the Buddhas,
May they abandon actions of ill deed,
May they practice those of good.
May all the suffering
of all that lives
in all the lands of all the worlds
be forever stilled,
And those creatures
crippled in their limbs,,
impaired of sense,
all be made whole.
May those afflicted with sickness,
weak and frail,
without refuge in the ten regions,
all swiftly be relieved of their ills,
and be renewed in their organs and strength.

May those threatened with death by rulers and thieves,
those who lie at the mercy of a hundred different miseries,
those living beings besieged and suffering
all be freed
from their hundreds of unendurable fears.
And those tortured by bonds,
bound and beaten,
those who live amid manifold poverty,

oppressed by many thousands of afflictions,
incurring all manner of misery
and terrors which they cannot bear,
May they be released from their bonds,
May the scourged be delivered from their beatings,
May the condemned have life,
and the troubled be unafraid.
May those who hurt with hunger and thirst
partake of a feast;
May the blind see a myriad of shapes,
the deaf hear a symphony of sounds,
the naked be clothed,
and the poor find a treasure.
May all have the pleasure
of possessing many precious jewels;
May none be tormented by feelings of pain;
May they all be fair of face and figure,
their bodies subdued,
their minds abounding with unremitting bliss.

By the mere thought,
May their wishes for merit and riches,
food and drink,
at once be made manifest.
May their longings for the melodies of lute and drum,
for streams, lakes, and ponds,
pools full of golden lotus and utpala,
their dreams of clothes and wealth,
pearls, gems, exquisite golden ornaments,
and lapis lazuli
all be instantly be fulfilled.
May there not arise
an anguished cry
in any world.
May none know unhappiness,

May they all be beautiful,
and may they be a light for one another.

Whatever is held most high by humanity
May it be theirs simply through thought.
May all their desires
immediately upon conception
be altogether realized
as the fruit of their merit.
Throughout the three times,
may they have incense and garlands,
scented oils, aromatic powders,
variegated flowers, and flowering trees.
May they take them and
May they be happy.

May they worship in the ten directions
all the inconceivable Ones Gone Thus,
the Bodhisattvas,
the Hearers,
and the immaculate, pure teachings of Dharma.

May migrators shun all that is unworthy,
pass beyond the eight states of unrest,
and attain crowning, kingly leisure.
May all beings always have the Buddhas at their side;
May they always be born into noble families
May their affluence and fortune flourish
May they be richly adorned for endless eons
with praise and fame,
and with lovely, radiant bodies.

May they be brave
May they be strong
May they be wise and lucid

May they ever strive for Enlightenment
May they engage in the Six Perfections
May they behold in the ten quarters
the Buddhas beatifically seated
upon thrones of precious lapis lazuli
before the supremely sanctified Tree of Enlightenment,
and there
may they hear
the Truth revealed.

From: The Noble Vajra Banner of Victory Sutra

That suffering,
that mass of suffering,
the suffering of all sentient beings
and their various obstructions
and hindering actions
because of which they do not see the Buddhas
nor do they hear the Dharma
nor know the Sangha,
do I now take upon this
my own body –
a bundle of pain
accumulated through three defiled actions.

The suffering of those beings
who are born in hell,
who dwell in realms of cruel migrations –
may death take them beyond such migrations –
That awesome mass of suffering do I assume,
to that end I strive,
in that end I take joy,
from that end I shall not turn away
nor shall I run away
nor towards that end shall I be dismayed
or afraid
or draw back
or be apathetic

If you question, why?
It is because I bear the burden of all that lives.

This is not out of desire for my own pleasure,
but that I have vowed to free all sentient beings

and thus to fully unfold them.
I shall free all wandering beings:
free them from the desolation of being born,
from the desolation of old age,
and of disease;
free them from the desolation of the rounds of birth and death,
from the desolation of all bad migrations
and of never-ending unrest;
free them from the desolation of all that is conditioned,
of all obscuring views;
from the desolation of the depletion of virtuous actions,
and of unknowing arising from the depths.

From all shall I liberate all:
all those creatures entangled in the nets of their own desires,
shrouded in veils of ignorance,
clinging to their worlds of conditioned-being,
in their final moments afraid;
all those creatures plunged into the depths of pain,
subsisting in prisons of repeating patterns of existence,
without wisdom,
without honor in their words,
in doubt,
irresolute,
knowing only sadness;
unknowing of dependent-arising,
alone,
swept-round in whirlpools of afflicted minds and subjugated lives,
all these creatures shall I establish
in the kingdom of sovereign wisdom.

My struggle is not for liberation for myself alone,
but by the mind of very omniscience
shall I unbind all others
from the wheel of existence,

The ever-turning wheel
from which it is so hard to be freed.
I shall deliver them out of the awful abyss,
save them from all harm,
rescue them from the torrent
of their own swirling minds;
Upon myself do I rest the load of sorrow
of all of them.
It is my pleasure
to suffer the pain
of each and every tortured existence
In all ,
however many realms of existence,
I shall not defraud all the world
of my roots of virtue.
I shall strive to abide
in even a single bad migration,
I shall,
without exception,
abide in all bad migrations
in all the realms of existence
for the sake of liberating living beings.

If you question why –
is it not reasonable for but one being to suffer
rather than all beings
fall to realms of ruin?

I, myself,
here let my blood
that I might redeem
all wandering beings
from the wilderness of the Lord of Death's domain,
from places of birth as animal,
and as hell-being.

With this very body
shall I endure all suffering aggregates of feeling
for the sake of all sentient beings.
I take joy in reaffirming
the trustworthy truth of my proclamation:
'I am the yoke-bearing nape
of all sentient beings
for the sake of all sentient beings.'
I shall not forsake even one sentient being.

If you question why –
with all that lives as my object
I shall engender
the very mind of Omniscience itself.
that is,
not for my own pleasure,
but that I may altogether liberate all living beings
have I wholly set forth
towards unsurpassed, perfect,
complete enlightenment.
Thus, whenever and for however long
all beings are attaining great happiness,
from happiness never before known
up to the ecstasies of very Omniscience,
shall I wholly dedicate my roots of virtue:
dedicate them that I may be
a leader drawing others along,
a bearer of a lamp,
a guide for those on their journey to peace,
provisioner for those
on their journey towards leisure;
dedicate them that I may be skilled in methods
and wise in meanings;
that I may abide on the furthestmost shore
having navigated the seas of cyclic existence

in the wisdom-ship of All-knowing;
that I may be a master of pure dedication,
and a teacher pointing the way
to transcendence.

I shall in every way
cultivate the roots of virtue
for the sake of every living thing.
I shall totally dedicate these roots of virtue:
dedicate them that I may
liberate all sentient beings,
that I may be known to all,
and free all sentient beings;
that I may care for them,
spiritually mature them,
fulfill the needs,
and dispel the doubts of all sentient beings.

I am like the sun;
I depend upon no other.
I shall not surrender
the Bodhisattva's armor to another;
indeed, I shall eliminate the very need for others.

I shall not pause from effort
to protect but even one being
and as one, all,
all living beings.
I shall not cease from utter devotion
to assuage all suffering;
I shall not settle for trifling roots of virtue;
I shall know no peace
with less
than all-consuming dedication.

All My Mothers

All my Mothers, I shall to with you
and be your guide.
In your most need
be by your side.
Until upon the vantage-ground of Truth
we stand together,
In Love's and Wisdom's
incomparable pleasure.

Take into your heart
the sufferings of all mother sentient beings
and again and again
give away your merit and happiness to them.

‘Lama’

A Bodhisattva's Garland of Jewels – by Atisha

bodhisattvamaniavali

I bow down to great compassion
I bow down to the profound teachers
I bow down to the sacred beings

Now I shall be done with indediveness
and wholeheartedly take up my practice
no longer lazy, lethargic and listless,
always nourishing joy in my effort.

Mindful, alert and careful,
I shall protect the gateways of my senses in all situations,
checking my thoughts again and again,
three times a day and three at night.

Let me proclaim my own faults,
but not look for the mistakes of others
keeping my good qualities to myself,
and pointing out the good qualities of others.

Let me be unmoved by wealth and honors,
never seeking profit and reputation,
desiring little and content with what I have,
grateful to those who show me kindness.

I shall meditate on compassion and loving kindness,
and make strong my awakened heart, bodhicitta
Having curbed the ten harmful actions,
I shall always be reliable, with confidence in myself.

Outwitting pride and anger,
let my mind rest in unassuming simplicity
Refusing to make a living by deceit or manipulation,
I shall support myself with right livelihood.

Let me cast of all material clutter,
and wear instead the jewels of the Noble Ones;
Quitting all my compulsive business,
Let me spend my time in quiet places.

I must stop all afflicted and meaningless talk,
and always control my speech
Then when I meet a spiritual teacher or master,
I can offer service with respect.

Regarding sentient beings who are beginners
as well as those who have the Eye of Dharma,
I shall cultivate the thought of all of them as teachers.

And when I see any sentient being,
let me perceive my father, mother, son, or daughter
But sidestepping friends who influence me negatively,
I shall rely instead on the spiritual friend.

Freeing myself from the mind of unhappiness and aversion,
I shall go where I must with happiness
Freeing myself from attachment to anything,
I shall remain where I am without attachment

Because of attachment, I may not even obtain a good rebirth,
and may be cut off from a life of liberation
So wherever I discover a true path to happiness,
I should always put my energy there

I determine to finish first
whatever I have begun to do

This way, everything will be done well
Otherwise, nothing at all will be accomplished

Since I am still joyless and enthralled by negativity,
when a feeling that I am better than someone arises,
I shall flatten my pride
and remember the advice of my teachers
When a feeling of discouragement arises,
I shall praise the magnificence of mind
and meditate on the emptiness of both feelings

When attachment or aversion arises in any situation
I should see its object as illusion and projection
When I hear upsetting talk
I should regard it as an echo
When my body is hurt,
I should know this as the result of my previous actions

I would do better to live in wilderness beyond the edge of towns,
like a wounded animal,
sequestered, by myself,
abiding without attachment

Then constantly holding in mind my practice commitments,
when a lack of focus or indifference arises,
I should take note of these shortcomings in myself
and reconnect with the heart of my path of practice

Whenever I do see others
then let me speak calmly, kindly, and sincerely,
without frown or preoccupied look
and, smiling, remain fully present

When I am with those I see daily,
let me delight in giving without holding back
and eliminate any jealousy

To protect the minds of others,
let me stay clear of all contention
and always practice patience

Never flattering nor fickle in relationships,
let me be grounded and steadfast always,
free of contempt for others,
conducting myself respectfully

When giving guidance to others
let me have compassion and the wish to be of benefit
Without criticizing any Dharma teaching,
and letting others aspire to whichever they are drawn,
I shall practice by way of the ten Dharma activities,
dividing my days and nights between them

Whatever good I accomplish throughout the three times
I shall dedicate to the highest, complete enlightenment,
spreading my positive force to living beings,
sowing the seeds of the seven-part practice,
the great aspirational prayer

If I practice like this
the two accumulations of wisdom and positive force
will be perfected
and the two kinds of obscurations will be exhausted
I will fulfill the purpose of my human life
and attain highest enlightenment

These seven
the jewels of certainty and of ethical discipline,
the jewels of giving and of listening to teachings,
the jewels of personal integrity
and of care for how one affects others,
and the jewel of supreme wisdom,
these are the seven jewels that are inexhaustible treasures

Describe them only to those with mature humanity
May I watch my speech when among many
May I watch my mind when alone

Written by the glorious master of India, Atisha Dipankara,
Heart of Perfect Wisdom, Illuminator Who is Entirely Good.
Thus 'The Bodhisattva's Garland of Jewels' is complete.

Twenty-Seven Verses On Mind Training, by Je Tsongkhapa, Great Dharma King of the Three Realms

1. With body, speech and mind fully aligned,
I prostrate fervently before those rare beings,
who are victorious over all notions of limitation,
and before their spiritual daughters and sons.
May a cosmic celebration of pure poetry,
perfectly expressing the most subtle teaching
of these victorious sages and the inheritors of their wisdom,
now burst forth like an infinite garden in perpetual spring.
2. Gaze calmly with the clear eye of Prajnaparamita
upon universal manifestation, this beginningless tapestry
woven from vibrant karmic threads of conscious beings,
and listen to the harmonious symphony of interdependence.
Purify entirely from the slightest shadow of negativity
this boundless expanse of apparent struggle and conflict.
With diamond-clear intention, instill faith everywhere.
With mirrorlike wisdom, stabilize all chaotic minds.
3. If shadows of negativity are not dispelled immediately,
these strange, insubstantial absences of light
gain immense potency with every new action,
until even those who understand the dangers of negation
will not have enough power to choose the way of Clear Light.
Even those who study philosophy and speak eloquently
are unable to release themselves from illusory darkness.
4. The full spectrum of struggling and aspiring humanity,
from immature persons to advanced contemplatives,
suffers the painful delusion of clinging
to these empty shadows, as they become filled

with affective power by egocentric action and intention.

5. This apparent bondage, this clinging to shadows,
is constituted by reactions of pleasure and pain,
obviously or subtly rooted in self-serving motivation.
By those rare beings who have gone beyond,
who throughout all time abide in bliss as Buddhas,
the true nature of reactions and their results
is clearly known to be insubstantial.
But the boundless expanse of self-oriented beings
who bind themselves inexorably to selfish motivation,
therefore cannot liberate or even distance
themselves slightly from egocentricity.
6. We should meditate carefully and thoroughly
upon the inevitably binding nature of negativity,
learning to distinguish sensitively and unerringly
between actions which negate the preciousness of others
and actions which affirm and judiciously care for others.
From this clear viewpoint, renounce all negation
and strive with the total commitment of your being
to become entirely affirmative of all life everywhere.
7. The seeds of action are positive and negative intentions.
Any intention consciously rooted in selfless motivation,
desiring only sheer goodness for all conscious life,
will establish the stable ground of goodness
and will universally generate rich results of goodness.
Any intention even slightly weakened by selfish motivation
undermines both the ground of our life and its fruits.
Intention is the sole creative force of existence.
8. To cling to the intention of triumphing over another,
the desire to prosper at the expense of any being

or to indulge in the slightest bias against any being because of personal feelings of attraction or repulsion, these alone are the causes for whatever suffering exists in personal lives and in the universe as a whole.

We should meditate ceaselessly on this revolutionary truth, remaining conscious of it during every moment of existence.

9. Those who attempt to deceive with words of advice that in any way exalt selfishness and depreciate selflessness become hopelessly lost in narrow-mindedness, obsessed with their own selfish interests. Such persons create the only error in the universe, diverting our precious care and concern for others to ourselves. This deception not only expresses hatred for Buddha's wisdom but is the absurd attempt to destroy universal Buddha nature.
10. To avoid decisively this disastrous way of hatred, bring to birth within your stream of awareness the maternal mind of totally positive intentions toward all beings as toward cherished children. This mind of kindness, supremely skillful in loving care, unveils the infinite value of every single life, demonstrating compassion as the meaning of existence. But the clumsy negative mind, operating blindly without concern for the preciousness of others, drains the nectar of meaning from human life. Cultivate assiduously the selfless love that transforms every thought and action into tangible help for conscious beings.
11. The method taught by awakened sages to develop this skillful mind of kindness is to cut the root of all selfish projections by repeatedly and intensively studying Perfect Wisdom,

meditating single pointedly on its essence
in a state of contemplative stillness and stability.
With the clarity and honesty of such concentration,
projected worlds of self-serving desire will melt
in the sunlight of meditation, like structures of ice,
revealing the magnificent secret of our existence,
its total significance and absolute justification,
which is active compassion for all conscious life.

12. Such meditative practice brings to light
the mind which envisions only the well-being of others,
which is constantly grateful to all beloved beings
for the immeasurable kindness they have poured forth
through beginningless time as mothers, fathers,
children, friends, benefactors and teachers.
This mind of goodness knows only the ceaseless longing
to benefit all these blessed beings without exception
in whatever manner and on whatever level imaginable.
13. To remember vividly during every moment
the kindness that has been expressed by all beings,
and to cultivate an intense and constant longing
to return even a small portion of this kindness,
unveils the true significance of life in all worlds.
The person who fails to respond wholeheartedly
to this call for universal kindness and concern
is on a lower plane of development than animals,
who are capable of experiencing immense gratitude.
14. Those who unhesitatingly embrace and tenderly serve
all suffering creatures during this degenerate age,
just as a loving mother painstakingly cares
for even the most wayward of her children,
they alone are the teachers of the holy life
who authentically walk the Buddha Way.

15. The mind that faithfully and tirelessly
serves and elevates conscious beings
is sheer goodness, constantly giving the gift of itself,
its faith in ever-expanding goodness, to all other minds,
thereby benefiting them in the most direct way.
Of all possible forms of benefit on any level,
the highest is to teach this practice of love,
this indomitable faith in universal goodness,
by the direct transmission of selfless awareness
flowing transparently from mind to mind
in accordance with the need and capacity of each mind.
This is true teaching, tangibly transmitting
the living energy of universal goodness
which becomes perpetually active in the recipient,
even during the most pressing times of crisis,
never evaporating into mere words or concepts.
16. During this blissful practice, continually cultivating
the wonderful, ever-expanding mind of goodness,
even the slightest lack of sympathetic joy disappears
and awareness becomes more concentrated and selfless,
while the selfish emotions and conceptual projections
which compose this narrow conventional world
are gradually effaced, and we are completely liberated.
The brilliant sun of Great Compassion shines unobstructed.
The spirit of wholehearted love in every thought and action
constitutes the spontaneously radiating sunlight,
effortlessly melting the mist of self-centeredness,
vastly strengthening our constant efforts for all beings.
17. Beings benefit each other, consciously or unconsciously.
Even enemies become profound benefactors in subtle ways.
Those who clearly perceive this radical principle
find no isolated object for hostile thought.
They can discover and encounter only friends,

benefactors, and inseparably related beings.
This insight avoids aggressive thinking
and allows the mind to expand endlessly
into wholesomeness, generosity, and sympathy.

18. Never offering the slightest encouragement to hostility,
never hesitating to embrace the concerns of others,
pay complete attention to every altruistic impulse
that arises in the stream of pure awareness.
Contemplate the teaching of selfless compassion,
calming and clarifying the turbulent flood
of egocentric mind with the sweetest meditation.
Renounce the meaninglessness of selfish life.
Become devoted to the true meaning of existence,
the spontaneous, active compassion for all lives.
If one does not refute self-centered motivation,
the subtle tendencies of the mind can never be free
from the gross or subtle disposition to negation.
19. Transform the intense activity of daily life
into the harmonious expression and teaching of truth
by affectionately reminding and being reminded
that the bitter dark fruits of negating others
are poisonous, to be most carefully avoided,
while the sweet bright fruits of affirming others
are life-giving, to be thoroughly enjoyed.
Authentic delight exists only in serving others,
and suffering springs only from harming others
or insensitively ignoring the needs of living beings,
all of whom are as intimately related to us
as our own precious mother and father.
20. So sensitive an ecology is the interdependence of all
that the slightest attention and assistance to others
creates moral elevation for ourselves and humanity,
while the slightest indifference or neglect toward others

creates moral harm for ourselves and our civilization.
The faintest spark of ill will toward other beings
can burst forth into a terrible forest fire,
consuming vast expanses of sympathetic joy.
Even the faintest negative reaction or malicious wish
opens wide channels throughout our entire being
for life-destroying poisons of negation
and life-obscuring shadows of self-cherishing.

21. Cast far away from all precious humanity
these lethal doses, these ominous shadows,
by cultivating instinctive admiration and love
for those who practice the way of selflessness.
Adore such bodhisattvas for their irreversible vow
to remain intimate with the struggle of living beings
as beacons of love and as the light of panoramic vision.
22. Once identified with this luminous way of life,
you will experience every moment as soaked in bliss,
tasting the delight of compassionate responses
to even the most negative actions of other beings.
I have composed this poem of rapturous affection
further to strengthen the diamond-sharp conviction
of those already faithful to the path of wisdom.
23. Gazing back over these exuberant verses,
I perceive an abundant banquet of poetry,
easy to assimilate and to understand clearly.
Entirely in accord with the teaching of the sutras
and with the deep realization of awakened sages,
these words are full of subtle nourishment.
To contemplate their various levels of meaning
is not only to taste the nectar of wisdom
but is to walk the sublime path of compassion.

24. This surprising poem condenses into a few verses
the profound and extensive teachings of my lineage.
I have composed these melodic lines,
like heavenly wish-fulfilling gems,
to benefit the minds of all beloved beings.
Those with strong capacity for meditation in action
will deepen their insight into the nature of Reality
by following these words into the heart of Buddha.
25. Some authors tie complex knots of philosophical terms,
while others rave incoherently like mad persons.
In the most beautiful hermitage, the snow mountains of Tibet,
this poet, known as Ever-Expanding Mind of Goodness,
has attempted to write with richness and lucidity.
26. May the bliss of the mystical fusion
of transcendent wisdom with tender compassion
fall like sweet summer rain from dark blue clouds,
the motivation of goodness, skillfully and gracefully
opened by lightening flashes of selfless awareness.
May conscious beings in every realm and condition
enjoy their glorious existence as the dynamic play
of Lord Buddha's four modes of manifestation:
transparent, universal, heavenly, and earthly.
27. Having become, through the medium of this poem,
the powerful and eloquent speech of Divine Manjushri,
speaking directly with the harmonious and melodious
voice of the transcendent Wisdom Deity,
may I and all my relations and companions,
from small insects to tenth-level bodhisattvas,
attain the blessings of primordial Buddha nature:
infinite bliss, infinite fulfillment, infinite perfection,
and universal conscious enlightenment.

Aryasura's Aspirational Prayer in Seventy Stanzas

*Homage to the Awakening Warrior:
the entirely good Samantabhadra*

1. Homage to the Buddhas Gone to Bliss, endowed with an accumulation of immeasurable precious qualities, who have uprooted every last poisoned tree of moral failings and who abide during the three times throughout the ten directions.
2. Homage to the Truth of Dharma that opens the wisdom-eye of beings in all three realms, that disperses the gloom of unknowing and is the means for extracting the poisonous arrow of latent tendencies.
3. Homage to the Sons of Those Gone to Bliss, the Sangha intent on virtue who never revert (to worldliness) and whose thoughts are motivated by great compassion. Unceasingly I bow my head to all who have opened the eye of their mind.
4. Whatever slight non-virtue I have committed throughout my lifetimes, or have encouraged, or rejoiced in, I lay bare before the Conquerors And pledge never to commit them again.
5. Without an exception, I rejoice in the virtue accumulated by Those Gone to Bliss, Solitary Realizers, Listeners and Conquerors' sons and in other wholesome deeds of worldly beings
6. Whatever non-virtue creatures commit confounded by venomous emotional afflictions, for them may I surely plunge alone with pleasure in the realms of hell.

7. Having satiated the world with the nectar of peaceful delight, may everyone's mind become active in virtue. May I willingly take on myself As much misery as beings may have.
8. May perfect awakening itself be produced soon in the minds of these beings. May those who have generated the pure awakening thought perfectly accomplish the collections for enlightenment.
9. By accomplishing the collections of virtue and attaining the spiritual levels, by remaining the lineage of Protectors of all three worlds and by annihilating the foes (of Dharma), may the abode of the Great Kingdom of Truth over the three worlds be attained.
10. No matter how many days there have been since the Awakened Beings became enlightened under the Bodhi-tree, I beseech those who are alive and abiding, Hereafter to cause the incomparable nectar of Truth to rain upon ongoing beings.
11. I entreat those nobly-minded ones who have completed their sublime activities for the sake of others and who are about to enter the supreme state beyond sorrow to remain for a long time acting to benefit others.
12. How ever many sentient beings there are wandering in the gloomy three worlds I shall invite them as my guests to savor the blissful nectar of extreme peace.
13. Whatever virtue has been accumulated in this way shall be dedicated totally for perfect awakening. Thus, may I never be apart for even an instant from bodhicitta - the mind intent on enlightenment.
14. Until the rank of those gone to Bliss - the basis of complete perfection - is gained, may I never be apart from the leader of the Subduers and the Awakening Warriors.

15. They are the ones who finely elucidate the path of activities for benefiting others. May I also advance, free from despondency, through every spiritual level of the Sons of the Awakened Ones.

16. May my body be complete with the physical attributes of a human and amassed with qualities worthy of praise by all creatures; may I recollect past lives, be born to an honorable family and have an attractive body.

17. Having discarded the vile action of ceasing to aid others but zealously working for my welfare alone, (aroused) by thoughts tormented with compassion may I cherish dearly all creatures without favoring one.

18. May there be not the slightest grasping in the thoughts of others at my possessions that I consider the wealth of others, but may they take and use whatever they wish like someone who never doubts his own wealth.

19. Even if someone should demand my flesh, may I offer it with pleasure in my eyes; may I always donate my limbs and so on for the welfare of all embodied beings.

20. May I, like a wish-fulfilling gem, provide all that beings desire and may I, like the wish-granting tree, completely fulfil their hopes.

21. May I spontaneously banish evil actions far away like filth and may I never breach the dam of precepts proclaimed by the supreme Subduer.

22. By abolishing concern for my body and life, may I always enjoy places of solitude; may my thoughts turn away from all gains and honor as if they were poisoned food.

23. Like a child of lowly status, I will discard arrogance, self-importance and pride toward beings and shall act to establish harmonious relations like in a gathering of kin from a noble family.

24. May I be accustomed to ethical discipline, an ornament utterly pacifying all (obscurations); stainless like the moonlight and the root of a lotus, untorn, unmixed and unsoiled.

25. Although someone against whom I have done no wrong should see my head, splitting it into hundreds of pieces, I shall unceasingly hold him dear in my mind just as (a mother) cherishes an only son.

26. Should someone become angry with me from his heart and needlessly rob me of my life, may the unbearable and bitter fruits of his actions never arise.

27. Although anger, abuse, provocation and aggression should besiege me, may I never forsake patience but willingly take on all adversity to practice the deeds of the Conquerors' Sons.

28. Thus, may the dangling rope of doubt never sway in my mind for even an instant over the extremely profound and highly logical Dharma of the Subduer, that never before did I find.

29. May I who am born from lifetime to lifetime, by earnestly acting to benefit all beings, never fail to engage in vast virtues for even a mere moment of time.

30. Like a servant, may I accomplish all the tasks of every living being and, having accepted the burden of working for all, may sentient beings abide in happiness.

31. Since my body acts as a servant for others, even when speaking, may I be pleased to teach them Dharma and may even my thoughts constantly be empowered by the mind endeavoring to benefit others.

32. Even if I alone have to undergo misery for innumerable aeons in hell, still may I ripen sentient beings spiritually without ever becoming weary.

33. Surely, in the very process of accomplishing (the welfare of others) I actually will do this very armor of spiritually nurturing the three types of beings so that they may become disciplined.
34. May I joyfully cross without hesitation pits so filled with burning embers of fire that there is no space, so as to hear even one word of the good doctrine.
35. In abandoning being enticed by the results of all concentration and formless absorptions, but by dwelling on the Supreme Limit of Perfection, may I be accustomed purely to the bliss that arises.
36. Having mounted the horse that is calm abiding that is not obsessed, (with the warm experience of meditative absorption), may I tame the elephant of the mind that naturally roams, is most difficult to tame and ventures along the wrong path.
37. Since the supremely fine riches possessed by Rulers of Gods and Universal Emperors, being in the nature of desire are just like filth, may I never hold them in high regard.
38. There is no joy drifting through this existence similar to a burning house of iron, but being led by compassion, may I be reborn wherever it is conducive to assist others.
39. Whatever absorptions all spiritual children of Universal Protectors have mastered such as the Stance (of a Lion), the Inconceivable, the Sport of a Hero, the Various Activities,
40. The Going Bravely, the Treasure of Space and the Stainless, having attained all myself, I will bestow their bliss on the three kinds of beings, thus allowing them to enjoy their sublime accomplishments.

41. May I thoroughly and supremely perfect the ocean of craft, literature and art, and may every sentient being be wise in knowing the entire meaning of their own language.

42. Having gained the stainless, sharp and infinite intelligence distinguishing all words and meanings may I share with sentient beings the extremely profound and logical teachings.

43. To every living being without exception who does not perfectly understand Buddha's word may I finely elucidate many teachings as though inscribing letters on their minds,

44. Having surely ascended to the state of the ten fruitful powers may I actualize those practices that are the means for making the purpose of living beings completely worthwhile.

45. Just as all prayers of the Subduers are a cause for helping sentient beings, so too may I work constantly to attain the perfection of prayer.

46. By immediately suppressing as they arise all overwhelming masses of foe-like emotional afflictions and, not wavering from mental activities, may I remain only to be of benefit on earth.

47. By having perfectly realized these phenomena to be like illusions, mirages and magical emanations and having discarded the mesh of conceptions may I be of benefit throughout the three worlds.

48. Just as fathers especially cherish an only son, so will I continuously remain in meditation on pure love for every ongoing being by removing all stains (of aggression).

49. Just as mothers out of affection for an ailing son, in taking his burden on themselves, (suffer) accordingly, so will I work to enhance my compassion towards each and every ongoing sentient being.

50. When I see success delighting others may I, in especially generating much pleasure, remain meditating on joyfulness as if my only dear son were happy.

51. Having dispensed with anger and attachment towards sentient beings that correspondingly cause me to harm or to favor them, may I accomplish the tasks of all three worlds like completing one's work for one's son.

52. Having realized the powers, heightened awarenesses, analytical knowledges, mystical spells and the doors to liberation may I simultaneously be of benefit to sentient beings throughout the immeasurable expanse of the universe.

53. Whatever countries where the name of "Buddha" has not entered the ear, there may I act according to the deeds of Buddha through imparting his various methods.

54. Until the sun, the teacher of the three worlds, rises here in this universe, may I, like the sun, dispel the darkness (of ignorance) from each and every embodied being.

55. Whatever beings there are whose thoughts are saturated with evil and who have been rejected by many beings Gone to Bliss, may they be tamed by relying upon the sphere of action of my speech.

56. So that I may serve everyone in the universe I will be loving like a relative, kind like a mother and, like a father, shall give beneficial advice.

57. Even by merely recollecting my name may all beings immediately be protected from fear and may all misery of the three worlds be dispelled.

58. May I be a vase of goodness and medicine against illness for people who are destitute in hundreds of ways. May I also provide a cool pool of nectar continuously for the masses of hungry spirits.

59. May I be warmth for the cold hells and cause rain with sweet breezes to shower on the hot. As well, may I placate every harm in the very low realms of bad migration.

60. Even by beings merely remembering me may I be a true friend to those who face destitution, solid armor for those stricken by rain of arrows and cooling water from those afflicted by fire.

61. When beings remember me may I be an opponent for the venom of defilements, a firm bridge over the torrent of the three worlds, and may I bar the door to unfortunate destinies.

62. May even merely recollecting my name, be enough to prevent all beings from falling into the abyss of worldly existence. May I become the foundation of the stairway leading them to the pinnacle of pure peace.

63. Even if someone out of anger should recall my name for just an instant of time, may he never plunge into bad destinies and may he surely accomplish perfect Buddhahood.

64. May my excellences, stainless like moonlight, bring happiness throughout the whole universe; may I work to generate immeasurable delight for others even by merely breathing.

65. Having attained perfect awakening itself where all is fully complete may I also settle all ongoing beings in that ultimate awakening itself.

66. At that time, may not even slightly faulty actions arise in the minds of whoever (may be my disciples). May they always help other creatures and remain on the path of ten virtues.

67. May the realms of bad migration never be seen even in dreams of anyone fitting (to be my disciple) and may the far reaches of places of bad destiny be pleasurable like the realms of celestial beings.

68. As long as anyone remains in the midst of the ocean of the three worlds' non-virtues, may I remain in this world for them.

69. When I have enacted my passing into the state Beyond Sorrow may my teachings not become disordered and may none of my followers be swayed for even a moment by the dangling rope of doubt.

70. Thus by delighting in the performance of the Conquerors' Children, may whatever virtues I have gathered all be shared by each and every living being without exception.

Colophon: This venerable master "whose voice benefits others, a man of solitude" has realized all scriptures. Once on entering the midst of a forest he was attacked by a tiger and, overwhelmed with compassion, composed the Aspirational Prayer in 70 Stanzas to accomplish the welfare of living beings.

The Indian abbot Dharma-Shri-prabha and the Tibetan translator Bande (the monk) Pal-gyi Lhun-po'I-de have translated, checked and settled (the text into Tibetan from Sanskrit).

Part III a) Prayer in Zen; b) Prayer in Japanese Buddhism;
c) Prayer in the Chinese, and Vietnamese Mahayana Tradition;
and, d) Prayer in Pure Land Buddhism

Prayer in Zen

From 'Not Always So', by Shunryu Suzuki, from the chapter
entitled 'Supported From Within'

'In our service after reciting a sutra, we offer a prayer to dedicate the merit. According to Dogen Zenji we are not seeking for help from outside because we are firmly protected from inside. That is our spirit. We are protected from inside, always, incessantly, so we do not expect any help from outside. Actually it is so, but when we recite the sutra, we say a prayer the usual way.

In one of our dedications of merit we say, 'May the two wheels (the Dharma Wheel and the material wheel) of the temple go smoothly, and may calamities which the country and the temple may face, calamities like war, epidemic, famine, fire, water, and wind, be averted.' Although we say this, actually the spirit is different. We do not observe our way, or recite our sutra to ask for help. That is not our spirit. When we recite the sutra, we create the feeling of non-duality, perfect calmness, and strong conviction in practice. If that kind of feeling is always with us, we will be supported.

Dogen Says, 'If we do not practice our way with everyone, with all sentient beings, with everything in the world, on the cosmic stage, that is not the Buddhist Way.' The spirit of zazen practice should always be with us, especially when we recite sutras or observe ceremonies. It is not a dualistic or selfish spirit, but is calm and deep, with firm conviction.

When we practice in that way, we are always one with the whole Buddha World, where there is no karmic activity, and our everyday life will be protected by the kind of power which pervades everywhere.'

Selections from 'Opening the Hand of Thought', by Uchiyama Roshi, On Vow

No matter what we think about it, we cannot be separated from the original Self. At the same time, it's also true that we cannot be separated from our conditioned self, either, which has the karma to produce all kinds of delusion. So we can conclude that the human condition involves existing in the midst of this relationship between conditioned self and original Self.

From the perspective of conditioned self, original Self represents the direction toward which we should aim. This is the meaning of 'vow'- going in that direction.

The first of the Bodhisattva Vows is : However innumerable sentient beings may be, I vow to save them all. This means to settle as universal life wherever that life naturally settles. The second vow is: However inexhaustible my delusions (desires) may be, I vow to extinguish them. This means refraining from being dragged around by one's thought. But as long as we are human beings, we're going to have a mind that fabricates illusions, and so we have to study the Buddha-dharma to clarify the reality of our self. This is the meaning of the third vow: However limitless the dharma(s) may be, I vow to comprehend it (them). The fourth vow is: However endless the Buddha Way may be, I vow to complete it. We thereby vow to settle down as the original self.

In the Commentary on the Awakening of Mahayana Faith, we read, 'the true Mind of every sentient being itself teaches and leads each sentient being. This is the Vow of Buddha.' Vow is not a special speculative approach to something outside ourselves. The true Mind of sentient beings (that is, original Self) itself is vow. Thus, when we consider original Self from the vantage point of the conditioned self, we realize that we cannot live without vow.

On the other hand, when we consider conditioned self from the ground of original Self, we realize that we are not what we should be. We can't actualize original Self because we are constrained by the handcuffs and fetters of karma. In this frame of mind, we can't help but repent.

In the very nature of the relationship between original Self and conditioned self, vow and repentance naturally emerge. It's a mistake to consider it from only one perspective.

For example, Buddhist priests generally moralize too much. This is no good. If we reflect upon ourselves intently, we can see that no one is entitled to preach just moralisms. There's no use trying to hide the fact that none of us can carry out all these moralistic teachings. When speaking moralistically, if we don't include our own faults in the form of repentance, it's just a kind of lie. I think this explains why most people are unmoved by sermons. People listen to me without yawning, I guess, because when I speak in a moralistic way, I also reveal that I myself can't follow what I'm proposing. I try to expose my own faults as a form of repentance. And when I repent, the flame of my vow burns brighter.

As humans committed to a life of zazen, we should maintain both attitudes: vow and repentance. These are our two practices.

In Buddhism, 'big' refers to something beyond comparison and differentiation. This is revealed when we open the hand of our thinking that discriminates between things. When we entirely let go of thought, magnanimous mind is there. Then we encounter everything as *jinjippo jinissai jiko*, the all inclusive self that is one with the ten directions.

Whenever or wherever I am, I just live out the life of the Self which is only the Self. This is magnanimous mind. To take care of only one's own small purse is the small mind at work. Whenever, wherever I live out the Self in my own Way – that is magnanimous mind.

As a natural outgrowth of an attitude that whatever I encounter is nothing but myself, I take great care of my life, the approach toward everything that is called parental mind.

The love between lovers is different from conjugal affection. A marriage based exclusively on eros is bound to come to a sad end. Before marriage, there's no real need for the parties to serve one another. All they need is love. She loves him; he loves her – and that's it. After marriage, when they start living together, romantic or erotic love alone isn't enough. Conjugal love between husband and wife requires each to think of the other first. One has to take care of the other.

This is important because often people are adults only physiologically; spiritually, they're still children. When childish people get married, it's only natural that they'll have trouble, because such people always expect others to take care of them. Only people who have matured and can take care of others have parental mind.

Human beings have to become mature in the real sense of the word. This morning a couple who had married only yesterday came to visit me. I talked with them about this point. If you're adult only in the physical sense, your marriage is likely to collapse. Maturity means meeting others with parental mind. I realized this through my own mistakes, and I offer this advice to every newly married couple.

What's more, in Buddhism this mature attitude, meeting others with parental mind is enlarged and applied to the whole world. In the Lotus Sutra, this is expressed in the verse:

In this triple world,,
All is my domain;
The living beings in it
Are all my children

This is the mind that sympathizes with everything, that penetrates into everything - not for itself, but for others.

As a natural expression, we need to find the real meaning of our life in taking care of others and in putting our life-spirit into that attitude and effort. To find our life worth living isn't the same thing as just feeling a constant emotional happiness.

The life-spirit that meets everything with parental mind: That is joyful mind.

Joyful mind, parental mind, magnanimous mind: These are the three minds. We who are committed to a life of zazen must maintain the two practices (vow and repentance) and the three minds in our zazen practice.

An attitude of feeling safe and at peace as long as one is sitting is no good at all. All sentient beings are crying out in one form or another, they're suffering and in distress. We have to foster the vow deep in our hearts that we will work to settle all sentient beings. Vow is fundamental to our practice.

Even though we take this vow, it's difficult to carry it out, so we have to acknowledge this about ourselves with a repentant heart. Then we have to actualize our vow through the functions of the three minds.

Living by Vow

Live by vow and root it deeply.

When I think of vow, I always remember the section on Bodhidharma in the chapter called Gyoji ('Protecting and Maintaining Practice') of Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo. Gyoji describes the purest and most concrete form of vow. I recommended to one of my disciples, who was going to America to practice, that it would be a good idea to chant the section on Bodhidharma in Gyoji every day.

The First Ancestor in China came from the West under Hannyadara's decree. It took him three years to come to China by sea. He surely experienced innumerable hardships, wind and snow, and faced great danger sailing on the wide ocean. In spite of those difficulties, he arrived in an unknown country. Ordinary people, who hold their lives dear, can't even imagine doing such a thing.

This gyoji ('protecting and maintaining practice') must have stemmed from his great compassion and vow to transmit the dharma and save deluded living beings. He was able to do it because he himself was the 'dharma-self-of-transmission' and for him the whole universe was 'the world of transmitting dharma.' He did it because he understood that the whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but the Self and that the whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but the whole-ten-direction-world.

Wherever you are living is a palace; and there is no palace that is not an appropriate place to practice the Way. This is why Bodhidharma came from the West the way he did.

He had neither doubt nor fear, because he was living in 'the world of saving deluded living beings' (the world of vow).

I became a monk in 1941 and started to practice at Antaiji in 1949. Creating the next generation has been my vow since I was a middle-school student, and becoming a Buddhist monk was one step in actualizing that vow.

After I became a monk, the flame of my life blazed even brighter, despite the monastery buildings being terribly dilapidated and my life being very meager.

When times were hard, I was encouraged and given strength most by that section in Gyoji in the Shobogenzo, describing Bodhidharma's life.

In those days my life was so wretched I felt as if I were being trampled on. I was trampled over and over again the way we stamp on weeds, and I was never able to put forth even the tiniest bud.

When things were tough, I chose to stick with my vow and bury it deeply in the earth to take root there. If I hadn't, that vow would have died, because I was always being trampled down. But because the flame of that vow burned within me, the more I was trampled, the deeper I rooted my vow to create the next generation.

I think it was the same for Bodhidharma. He took the great trouble to travel all the way from India to China, where he met Emperor Wu of Liang. But the Emperor couldn't understand the Indian monk, so Bodhidharma went to Mount Shaolin. In short, that was it; he was trampled on. Still, he had vowed to transmit the dharma and save living beings. Because of that vow, he was able to live out his life. And while he was practicing zazen quietly at Mount Shaolin, he rooted the vow deeply in the ground.

Then came his disciple Eka (Huiko). He, too, was trampled down his whole life, even after he had become a disciple of Bodhidharma and practiced zazen. Through the times of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth patriarchs, they all had a hard time. But they rooted themselves in their vows. By the time of the Sixth Patriarch, spring finally came and Zen started to bud. Today it is even said that Zen is the foundation of all East Asian culture.

The same thing happened in my life. When I was practicing in my younger days, I was totally trampled on. But now spring has gradually arrived; quite a few people have gathered to follow in my footsteps either as lay practitioners or as direct disciples. Suppose that each of my disciples has his own disciples and that this were to continue for several centuries: it would be like a nuclear explosion! They can't help but create the new age of the buddha-dharma.

This is not my selfish ambition, but my vow as buddha-dharma: the vow to transmit the dharma and save deluded living beings, to live out life wherever, whenever, whatever happens. The Self-of-the-whole-ten-directions-world grows by the vow: However innumerable sentient beings may be, I vow to save them all. This is why Dogen Zenji wrote, "He did this because he understood that this whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but the true Way, that this whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but Self."

You have to expect to be trampled on by difficult circumstances, maybe even for years, but don't lose your life force under all that trampling. And unless you have that vow, you will lose it. Only when you live by vow does everything you meet- wherever, whenever, whatever happens- reinforce your life as buddha-dharma. As long as you have that vow to live out your life wherever you are, sooner or later spring will come. And when it does, you will have the strength to grow. This is the life force. You have to thoroughly understand that this is completely different from selfish ambition.

I believe that vow is very important, so important that after Sawaki Roshi died, I made it a rule to chant only the Four Bodhisattva Vows before and after my talks. There's no need to argue difficult philosophical matters. Just these four Bodhisattva vows... they're essential.

Contemplation: Inspiring Yourself to Practice

By Korean Zen Master Won Hyo

(English translation by Won-myong Sunim and Mark Mueller)

Introduction

Inspiring Yourself to Practice was written by the Shilla Monk Wonhyo (617-686). It consists of 706 characters, contained in one roll. In Korea, the text is one of the most important in the curriculum of the temple training, during the period of study. The text stresses the need to eliminate one's karmic bond with the world and to begin immediately to practice. The original Chinese text is kept at Haein-sa Temple, near Taegu, and the annotated version is kept at Songgwang-sa Temple, in Sunchon.

* Numbers in the text refer to explanatory notes at the end.

All the Buddhas

Who reside within the splendid realm of Nirvana
Have, throughout countless eons,
Discarded their desires and undergone arduous training.

Sentient beings

That transmigrate within the burning house of desire
Have, for countless generations,
Failed to discard their greed and desire.

The gates to heaven (the Pure Land)

Are not blocked;
Yet, few are those who enter them.
This is because most people make their home
Among the three poisons.¹

The evil realms² have no real power to seduce us,
Yet many enter them.

The deluded mind values
The four elements³ that make up the body
And the five desires⁴
As if they were jewels.

This being so,
Is there anyone who does not long
To retire to the seclusion of the mountains
In order to practice the Way?⁵

Yet people do not go there;
They remain caught up in desire.

Although you do not
Retire to the mountains
To cultivate your mind,
You should strive with all your energy
To perform good deeds.

If you can renounce your own pleasure,
You will become as trusted and respected
As the sages.
If you can undergo
That which is difficult,
You will become as respected
As the Buddha.

Those who greedily seek after things
Join the ranks of demons.
Those who give with compassion
Are the disciples of the Dharma King.

High mountains and lofty peaks
Are where the wise reside.
Green pines and deep mountain valleys
Are home to those who practice.
When hungry, such people pick fruit from trees

To calm their empty stomach.
When thirsty, they quench their thirst
With water from a stream.

Although we eat fine foods
In an attempt to carefully preserve this body,
Our bodies will definitely face destruction;
Even though we cover this body
With soft cloth,
Our lives are sure to come to an end.

Make a small mountain cave where echoes resound
Into a hall to chant the Buddha's name.
Let the sad cry of a wild goose
Be the heart-warming call of a friend.

While bowing, your knees may become
As cold as ice,
But you must not long for a warm fire.
Your stomach may writhe with hunger,
But you must not give in to your thoughts of food.

One hundred years pass like the blinking of an eye,
So why don't you practice?
How long is a lifetime?
Can you afford to neglect practice,
Wasting your time on leisure?

It is only he who renounces
All of the desires in his heart
That is rightfully called a practicing monk.
Only he who no longer yearns for the ways of the world
Is called "a monk who has renounced the house-holder's life."⁶

A practitioner who is caught
Within the net of worldly desires
Is like a dog who wears
Elephant's hide.
A man who practices the Way
Yet remains attached to worldly desire
Is like a hedgehog
Who tries to enter a rat hole.

Some people, in spite of their outstanding ability and wisdom,
Choose to live in the busy atmosphere of the city.
All the Buddhas feel pity and concern for such people.
Other people, although they have not yet developed
A deep practice,
Still choose to stay in the contemplative atmosphere of the mountains.
The sages feel a great joy
When they see such people.⁷

There are those who are skilled and learned,
But do not follow the precepts.
They are like men who are told of a cache of jewels
But do not get up and go to it.

There are those who practice steadfastly
But lack wisdom.
They are like men who want to go east
But mistakenly walk towards the west.

The actions of a wise man
Are like steaming grains of rice
In order to make a bowl of rice.
The actions of a man who lacks wisdom
Are like steaming grains of sand
In order to make a bowl of rice.
Everyone knows how to eat and drink
In order to satiate their hunger;
But no one seems to understand
The method of training --
The way to transform the ignorant mind.

Practice and wisdom must exist side by side.
For they are like the two wheels of a cart.
Likewise, helping oneself and helping others
Are like the two wings of a bird.
If you absent-mindedly chant for your donors
Over the morning offering of porridge
Without understanding the meaning,
You should feel ashamed
To face those who give alms.

If you chant
During the lunch-time ceremony
Without attaining the essence of the words you utter,
Won't you be ashamed to face
Great people and sages?

Everyone hates squirming insects
And those who can't distinguish between the dirty and the clean.
Likewise, the sages feel disgust with those monks
Who cannot distinguish between the defiled and the pure.
If you wish to be through with this world's conflict,
Good conduct is the ladder
That ascends to heaven.

Therefore, one who violates the precepts
And yet wishes to help others
Is like a bird with broken wings
That puts a turtle on its back and tries to fly.

If you're still not free from your own faults,
You will not be able to free others of their faults.
So why do you, who violate the precepts
Receive that which is provided by others?

It does not benefit you in the least
To merely maintain your physical body
If you neglect to practice.
And all your concern for this transient, fleeting life
Will not preserve it.

If you've set your sights
On the virtue of the great masters,
You must endure even the longest hardships.
Once you've set out for the Tiger Throne,⁸
You must forever leave all your desires behind you.

When the cultivator's mind is pure,
All the devas⁹ bow in praise of him.
When a follower of the Way loves lasciviousness,
The good spirits leave him.

At death, when the four elements of the body scatter,
You cannot preserve the body and remain in it any longer.
Today, evening has already arrived;
Tomorrow morning will soon be here.
So, practice now before it is too late.

Worldly pleasures are unsatisfactory;
Why do you greedily cling to them?

Enduring joy can be won through a single effort in patience;
Why won't you practice?

Those who practice feel shame
To see a seeker of the Way who remains attached to greed.
The virtuous man laughs
At the seeker who forsakes the householder's life
But is still wealthy.

Words, such as these written here, go on and on,
Yet clinging attachment does not come to an end.
"I'll do it next time" -- such words go on and on,
Yet you fail to put an end to clinging.

Clinging goes on and on,
Yet you fail to renounce worldly matters.
Your mind is filled with endless devious plans,
Yet you do not make up your mind to put an end to them.
"Today will be different," you say,
Yet you continue to perform evil actions every day.
"Tomorrow, tomorrow," you say,
Yet few are the days when you really do something good.
"This year will be different," you say,
Yet your defilements are without end.
"Next year I'll do it," you say,
Yet you don't grow in wisdom.

The hours pass,
And too soon a day and night are over.
The days pass,
And soon it's the last day of the month.
The months pass,
And suddenly another new year has come.
The years pass,
And in the blinking of an eye,

We find ourselves at death's door.

A broken cart
 Cannot be driven.
 When you're an old man,
 You cannot begin to practice.
 When you lie down,
 You will succumb to laziness.
 And when you sit,
 Your mind will be overwhelmed
 With stray thoughts.

For many lifetimes, you have failed to practice,
 Passing your days and nights in vain.
 Having lived many lifetimes in vain,
 Will you again fail to practice during this lifetime?

This body will inevitably come to an end;
 Who knows what body you will have next time?

Isn't this an urgent matter?
 Isn't this an urgent matter?

Notes

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1. Greed, hatred (anger) and stupidity (ignorance).
2. Durgati, the hell realm, the animal realm, etc.; there are 3, 4, or 5 according to text consulted.
3. Earth, water, fire and air are the four elements that everything is made of.
4. There are two meanings:
 - 1) the objects of the 5 senses (eye, ear, nose, mouth, body); these defile the True Nature when the mind is filled with desire;
 - 2) desire for wealth, sex, food, fame, and sleep.

5. The Way refers to the path to enlightenment.
6. When a person is ordained in Buddhism, he is said to have gone forth from household life. The idea is that leaving all the problems of family and home behind, he can better dedicate him/herself to spiritual attainment.
7. This is because city dwellers have little possibility of spiritual development but those living in the country, though they may not be advanced, have a good chance.
8. This is a name for the Dharma Seat, the special platform that a great monk sits on to give a Dharma lecture. Someone aiming to sit on this seat is aiming for enlightenment and so has to give up all attachments and desires.
9. The devas are the gods, beings who live in realms of constant pleasure.

From Dogen's teacher, Nyojo, as quoted in *Classics of Buddhism and Zen*

“You should ‘gouge out’ your eyes and see nothing at all – after that there will be nothing you don’t see; only then can it be called seeing... You should ‘block off’ your ears and hear nothing at all – after that there will be nothing you don’t hear; only then can it be called hearing... You should ‘knock off’ your nose and not distinguish smells – after that there will be nothing you can’t distinguish; only then can it be called smelling...

“You should ‘pull out ‘ your tongue, so that the world is silent – after that your ebullience will be uninterrupted; only then can it be called speaking... You should ‘slough off’ the physical elements and be completely independent – after that you manifest forms adapting to various types; only then can it be called person...

You should permanently stop clinging thought, so the incalculable ages are empty – after that arising and vanishing continue unceasing; only then can it be called consciousness...”

From The Bodhisattva Ceremony of the San Francisco Zen Center

Repentance

All my ancient twisted karma (kneeling)
from beginningless greed, hate, and delusion
born through body, speech and mind
I now fully avow

Bowing

Homage to the seven Buddhas before Buddha (standing)
Homage to Shakyamuni Buddha
Homage to Maitreya Buddha
Homage to Manjushri Bodhisattva
Homage to Samantabhadra Bodhisattva
Homage to Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva
Homage to the Ancestors

Four Vows

Beings are numberless, I vow to save them (kneeling)
Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them
Dharma gates are boundless, I vow to enter them
Buddha's Way is unsurpassable, I vow to become it

The Refuges

I take refuge in Buddha (standing)
Before all being
immersing body and mind

deeply in the way
awakening true mind

I take refuge in Dharma

Before all being
entering deeply
the merciful ocean
of Buddha's Way

I take refuge in Sangha

Before all being
bringing harmony
to everyone
free from hindrance

To-Rei Zenji's Bodhisattva Vow

Leader: I am only a simple disciple, but I offer these respectful words:

Assembly: When I regard the true nature of the many dharmas, I find them all to be sacred forms of the Tathagata's never-failing essence. Each particle of matter, each moment, is no other than the Tathagata's inexpressible radiance.

With this realization, our virtuous ancestors gave tender care to beasts and birds with compassionate minds and hearts. Among us, in our own daily lives, who is not reverently grateful for the protections of life: food, drink, and clothing! Though they are inanimate things, they are nonetheless the warm flesh and blood, the merciful incarnations of Buddha.

All the more, we can be especially sympathetic and affectionate with foolish people, particularly with someone who becomes a sworn enemy and persecutes us with abusive language. That very abuse conveys the Buddha's boundless loving-kindness. It is a compassionate device to liberate us entirely from the mean-spirited delusions we have built up with our wrongful conduct from the beginningless past.

With our open response to such abuse we completely relinquish ourselves, and the most profound and pure faith arises. At the peak of each thought a lotus flower opens, and on each flower there is revealed a Buddha. Everywhere is the Pure Land in its beauty. We see fully the Tathagata's radiant light right where we are.

May we retain this mind and extend it throughout the world so that we and all beings become mature in Buddha's wisdom.

Meal Chant (I)

Before serving

All:

Buddha was born at Lumbini
Enlightened at Bodhgaya
Taught at Varanasi
Entered nirvana at Kushinagara
Now we open Buddha Tathagata's eating bowls
May all be free from self-clinging

After bowls are opened

Leader:

For the benefit of all beings
We take refuge in Buddha
We take refuge in Dharma
We take refuge in Sangha
Let us recite the names of Buddha

During serving

All:

Homage to the Dharmakaya Vairochana Buddha
Homage to the Sambhogakaya Lochana Buddha
Homage to the Nirmanakaya Shakyamuni Buddha
Homage to the future Maitreya Buddha
Homage to all Buddhas in the ten directions past, present, and future
Homage to the Mahayana Saddharma Pundarika Sutra
Homage to Manjushri the perfect wisdom Bodhisattva

Homage to Samantabhadra the shining practice Bodhisattva
Homage to Avalokiteshvara the infinite compassion Bodhisattva
Homage to the many Bodhisattva Mahasattvas
Homage to the Maha Prajna Paramita

Leader at breakfast:

This morning meal comes through the efforts of all beings, past and present,
and gives us the ten strengths for complete practice.

Leader at lunch:

This food of three virtues and six tastes we offer to Buddha, Dharma,
Sangha, and all life in every world.

After serving before eating

All:

Innumerable labors brought us this food
We should know how it comes to us
Receiving this offering, we should consider
whether our virtue and practice deserve it
Desiring the natural order of mind,
we should be free from greed, hate, and delusion
We eat to support life and to practice the way of Buddha

Tassajara lunch only

O Spirits and Powers,
we offer this food to pervade all existence

This food is for the Three Treasures,
for our teachers, family and all people,
and for all beings in the six worlds

The first portion is to avoid all evil
The second is to do all good
The third is to save all beings
Thus we eat this food and awaken with everyone

After washing bowls as buckets enter

All:

The water with which we wash these bowls tastes like ambrosia
We offer it to the various spirits to satisfy them
Om Mahakushalaya Svaha!

After meal

Leader:

May we exist in muddy water with purity like a lotus
Thus we bow to Buddha

Meal Sutras (II – from the Diamond Sangha Sutras)

Sutras for formal meals

Verse on opening the bowls

(Unopened bowls before everyone, hands at gassho)

Buddha, born at Kapilavastu,
Attained the Way at Magadha,
Preached at Varanashi,
Entered Nirvana at Kushinagara.
Now as we spread the bowls of the Buddha Tathagatha we make our vows
together with all beings; we and this food and our eating are vacant,

Leader:

We take refuge in the Three Treasures,
Remembering our many honored guides
with gratitude for their gifts of wisdom.

The Ten Names of the Buddha

(Participants spread their bowls. Servers enter during this recitation
with trays of food and spoon out food into the bowls of students as they
extend them in turn.)

Vairochana, pure and clear Dharmakaya Buddha; Lochana, full and
complete Sambogakaya Buddha; Shakyamuni, infinitely varied
Nirmanakaya Buddha; Maitreya, Buddha still to be born;

All Buddhas Everywhere, past, present, future; Mahayana Lotus of the Subtle Law Sutra; Manjushri, Great Wisdom Bodhisattva; Samantabhadra, Great Action Bodhisattva; Avalokiteshvara, Great Compassion Bodhisattva; all venerated Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, the Great Prajna Paramita.

Leader, at breakfast:

Porridge is effective in ten ways
To aid the student of Zen.
No limit to the good result,
Consummating eternal happiness.

Leader, at lunch:

These three virtues and six flavors
Are offered to the Buddha and Sangha;
May all being of the universe
Share alike this nourishment.

The Spirit of acceptance:

First, we consider in detail the merit of this food and remember how it came to us;
Second, we evaluate our own virtue and practice, Lacking or complete, as we receive this offering;
Third, we are careful about greed, hatred, and ignorance, to guard our minds and to free ourselves from error;
Fourth, we take this good medicine to save our bodies from emaciation;
Fifth, we accept this food to achieve the Way of the Buddha.

On offering food to hungry ghosts:

Oh, all you hungry ghosts
We now offer this food to you;
May all of you everywhere
Share it with us together.

On lifting the bowl of rice in gratitude:

The first portion is for the Three Treasures,
The second is for the Four Blessings
The third is for the Six Paths;
Together with all we take this food.
The first taste is to cut off all evil
The second is to practice all good,
The third is to save all beings
May we all attain the Way of the Buddha.

On washing the bowls in hot tea:

We wash our bowls in this water;
It has the flavor of ambrosial dew;
We offer it to all hungry ghosts;
May all be filled and satisfied.

At the end of the meal:

The world is like an empty sky;
The lotus does not adhere to water
Our minds surpass that in purity;
We bow in veneration to the most exalted one.

Verse for Informal Meals

(This may be a translation of a Far Eastern gatha. There are several English variations.)

We venerate the Three Treasures
and are thankful for this meal,
the work of many people
and the sharing of other forms of life.

Small Verses Frequently Used at Zen Center

Robe Chant

Great robe of liberation
Field far beyond form and emptiness
Wearing the Tathagata's teaching
Saving all beings

Before Lecture

An unsurpassed, penetrating and perfect Dharma
is rarely met with even in a hundred thousand million kalpas
Having it to see and listen to, to remember and accept,
I vow to taste the truth of the Tathagata's words

After Lecture

Beings are numberless; I vow to awaken with them
Delusions are inexhaustible; I vow to end them
Dharma gates are boundless; I vow to enter them
Buddha's Way is unsurpassable; I vow to become it

Selections from 'Shikantaza', by Dogen, and Keizan Jokin Zenji

‘...even if you gain the Way, clarify the mind, resolve to pierce heaven, that is only strolling on the border of the Buddha Way. You are still (almost always) lacking the vivid way of emancipation.

Moreover, consider Sakyamuni-Buddha, who was enlightened from birth; to this day you can see traces of his sitting in straight posture for six years.

And Bodhidharma, who transmitted the mind-seal; even now you can hear of the fame of his facing the wall for nine years. These ancient sages practiced this way. How can we people of today refrain from practice!

Therefore, cease studying words and following letters.
Learn to withdraw, turning the light inwards, illuminating the Self.
(Doing so), your body and mind will drop off naturally, and original-Self will manifest.

If you wish to attain suchness, practice suchness immediately.’

Selections from Zazen Yojinki

(Things We Should Be Careful About Regarding Zazen)

by Keizan Jokin Zenji

Zazen allows a person to clarify the mind-ground and to dwell comfortably in one's original nature. This is called revealing the original Self and manifesting the scenery of the original ground.

Both body and mind drop off in zazen. It is far beyond the form of sitting or lying down. Therefore, free from considerations of good and evil, it transcends the distinctions of ordinary people and sages, it goes far beyond judgments of deluded or enlightened, it is entirely apart from the boundary between sentient beings and the Buddha. For this, put aside all affairs, and let go of all associations. Do nothing at all. The six senses produce nothing.

Now, zazen is entering directly into the ocean-of-buddha-nature and manifesting the body of the buddha. The inherent pure and clear mind is actualized in the present moment; the original-light completely illuminates everywhere.

Buddhas have appeared in this world for the sake of the One-Great-Matter: to show the wisdom and insight of the Buddha to all living beings and to make possible their entry therein. For this, there is a peaceful and pure way: zazen. This is nothing but the jijuyu-zanmai of all buddhas. [the samadhi of the Self which is not separated from others] It is also called zanmai-ozanmai (the King of Samadhis).

If you dwell in this samadhi for even a short time, the mind-ground will be directly clarified. You should know that this is the true gate of the Buddha-way.

If you wish to clarify the mind-ground, you should relinquish your various types of limited knowledge and understanding, throw away both worldly affairs and the buddha-dharma, and eliminate all delusive emotions. When the true mind of the sole Reality is manifest, the clouds of delusion will clear away and the moon of the Mind will shine brightly.

The Buddha said, “Listening and thinking are like being outside of the gate; zazen is returning home and sitting in peace.” How true this is! When we are listening and thinking, the various views have not been put to rest and the mind is still clogged up. Other activities are therefore like being outside of the gate. Zazen alone brings everything to rest and, flowing freely, reaches everywhere. Zazen is thus like returning home and sitting in peace.

Prayer in Japanese Buddhism

Jizo Bodhisattva - Protector of Little Ones

by Jan Chozen Bays

ALL OVER JAPAN, you will notice grey stone statues wearing red bibs and caps. You come across them tucked between urban shops and telephone poles, beside busy highways, at the crossing of rural dirt paths in the rice paddies and in old wooden shrines in the cool bamboo forests.

These figures are images of the much beloved Jizo Bodhisattva. A bodhisattva, an "enlightenment being," is one who has decided to turn back from complete union with the divine mystery (in Buddhist terms, delayed entering nirvana) to work in the world of human suffering. The name Jizo means "earth treasury" or "earth womb." Jizo is the guardian of all things that emerge from the earth, and the protector of those on physical or spiritual journeys. Jizo became the especial guardian of women and children, whose lives were considered perilous journeys in old Japan because of frequent epidemics, the risks of childbirth and infant mortality as high as 50 percent.

Bodhisattvas are revered not as unapproachable idols, but as embodiments of energies that we ourselves can cultivate. Jizo has both masculine and feminine characteristics, including benevolence, optimism, determination, fearlessness and full involvement in the world. Jizo is said to walk through hell realms unafraid, rescuing beings from misery, and is called the patron saint of lost causes, much like the apocryphal saint Christopher. Dressed as a simple monk, Jizo carries the six-ringed pilgrim staff in the right hand and the bright jewel of truth in the left.

A particular form of Jizo, the Mizuko Jizo, emerged after World War II to relieve suffering caused by the death of an infant or young child. Mizuko, meaning "water baby," is a term for unborn fetuses, who float in a watery

world. If children die early, they are taken back into the realm of the gods where they resided before birth, guided by Jizo Bodhisattva, who shelters little ones who might be confused by the events of a brief life and sudden death.

The devastation of war plunged many people into poverty and early death from starvation, tuberculosis and radiation exposure. The government, which before the war had favoured large families, reversed its policy and passed a law encouraging birth control through abortion -- the only effective form of contraception until the pill was made legal in January 2000. Thus many Japanese women have experienced the death of several children through abortion, miscarriage or disease.

In the West, we think of each human life as solid and discrete, beginning at conception and ending at death. The Buddhist view is of waves appearing and disappearing endlessly on a great ocean of life energy. When cause and effect combine in a certain way, a wave arises, appearing to us as an individual whom we can see and touch and love. When death occurs and it disappears from our view, we mourn our loss. If we could see clearly that it has only rejoined that ground of being and nonbeing from which it emerged, that it has indeed returned home, we would find great comfort.

The Mizuko Jizo ceremony was developed in Japan to help families who had lost infants. The Mizuko Jizo is portrayed as a child-monk, or as an adult monk holding a baby, with other children taking shelter in the folds of his long robes. A family could dedicate a statue of Jizo to the memory of their child and place it in a Jizo garden or cemetery associated with a temple. Often these cemeteries, with hundreds or even thousands of Jizo statues, are located next to the playground of the temple kindergarten, a visible affirmation of the harmony of lively activity and quiet repose, of birth and death. Families bring toys, food and handmade bibs or bonnets to place on the Jizo statues. Passing strangers, including school children, will make offerings to the statues, praying for their own safe journey in life and a peaceful transition for any children who have died.

The Mizuko ceremony is now celebrated at a number of American Zen temples. During an hour of silence, participants make remembrance tokens, bibs, hats and simple toys for the children they wish to recall and honour. The group then gathers in the Jizo garden to chant and dedicate their offerings to the children, placing them on or around a Jizo statue. The garments and toys are left in the garden to weather slowly and return to the five elements, as we and all life forms do. At our temple, families have come to honour children who died through miscarriage, abortion, illness or abuse, as well as twins who died during infertility treatments and adult children who died by suicide. The simple but deeply moving ceremony offers a palpable easing of the weight of suffering that surrounds the death of a child. This is the particular gift offered by the holy being Jizo Bodhisattva.

The Jizo Ritual

Mizuko Kuyo

In Japan, the *mizuko jizo* Buddha takes care of and represents stillborn, miscarried and aborted fetuses. Unique to Japan, the ceremonies surrounding the jizo were created and developed by women. Over the centuries, the image of the *mizuko jizo* has changed, from a dignified, adult figure, to a serene looking monk-child with a Buddha smile. The *jizo* has a double purpose. The image both represents the soul of the deceased infant/foetus, and is also the deity who takes care of children on their otherworld journey. The ritual of honouring the foetus or stillborn is called *mizuko kuyo*. The word *mizuko* means "water child," or "deceased infant/foetus," and *kuyo* means "memorial service."

In Japan, water is both an acknowledgement of death and an expression of faith in some kind of rebirth. When the foetus or newborn dies, it goes from the warm waters of the womb to its former liquid state, in which it prepares itself for an eventual rebirth. Historically, *mizuko* were buried beneath the floorboards of houses, where they were thought to mingle with the water of natural springs, which then carried them to larger bodies of water beneath the surface of the earth, which held special significance as receptacles of life.

The most common days for *mizuko kuyo* are during the three traditional holidays when offerings are made to ancestors: *bon* in the summer, and at the spring and summer equinoxes. The *mizuko kuyo* can be performed in different ways. Many Buddhist temples in Japan have special sections where a woman who can afford to may buy a tomb for her *mizuko*. The tomb consists of a stone, on top of which stands a carved figure of a *jizo*, generally wearing a red bib, and carrying a staff with rings or a stick with bells on top (which he uses to help the *mizuko* who can't yet walk). On the stone is written a *kaimyo* - a name given to a person after death.

These sites are not somber graveyards. In fact, they are often quite "happy" places. Some of the cemeteries are equipped with playgrounds for children.

While the children play, women (and sometimes men) bow, observe moments of silence, and ladle water over the *mizuko jizo* in an act of ritual cleansing. At times they may light a candle or a few sticks of incense, decorate the tombs with flowers, pinwheels and other toys, drape garments over the *jizo*, and even erect umbrellas over his head to keep off the rain.

Another type of memorial service for foetuses involves the use of *ema*. *Ema* are wooden plaques, often with roof-shaped tops, that are hung by string in special areas of temples and shrines. Many *ema* carry prayers for, and messages to, aborted foetuses. These prayers and messages often take the form of *Yasuraka ni nemutte kudasai* (please sleep peacefully), or *Gomen ne* (please forgive me). Most of them are signed *haha* (mother), but sometimes the father, or the entire family, will sign as well.

The oldest form of memorial is maintained by women in communities, who tend to *jizo* shrines on street corners and roadsides. Women take turns putting out flowers, offering food, washing the statue(s), and lighting incense. Women passing them can stop for a short act of *kuyo*, or simply bow to the *jizo*.

Women can also perform the *mizuko kuyo* at home, in front of their ancestral shrines. First they buy a *kaimyo* from a priest, who will write the name on an *ihai*, a mortuary tablet. The tablet is then placed in the ancestral alcove of the family, and given memorial services along with other ancestors. The foetus will be honoured with reverential bows, and, in pious Buddhist homes, a prayer will be recited. This prayer, perhaps the *Heart Sutra*, the *Kannon Sutra*, or the *Lotus Sutra*, is made to both *jizo* and the foetus at the same time.

In Japan, abortion is seen as a necessary sorrow, a painful social necessity, and a means for protecting what are felt to be "family values." Some Buddhists worry that abortions could become trivialized, which would lead to a hardening of people's hearts. The *mizuko kuyo* serves a positive,

therapeutic role, keeping people in touch with their emotions and their loss.

It is unfortunate that nothing like *mizuko kuyo* exists in Western society. Unless women perform the ceremonies themselves, aborted fetuses are not symbolically recognized. Many women create their own ceremonies, and through them find comfort and healing.

Prayer in the Chinese and Vietnamese Mahayana Tradition

The Universal Door Chapter from The Lotus Sutra

Buddha of ten thousand beautiful aspects
 Please may I ask you this question
 Why did they give that Bodhisattva
 The name Avalokita?

The world honoured one, adorned with all beauties
 Made this reply to Aksayomati
 It is because the actions due to deep aspirations
 Can reach 10,000 different places

The aspirations as wide as the oceans
 Were made countless lives before
 She has already attended billions of Buddhas
 And made her great aspiration pure by mindfulness

Whoever says her name, whoever sees her image
 With mind perfectly collected and pure
 That person shall be able to overcome
 The sufferings of all the worlds

If anyone of cruel intent
 Should push you into a pit of fire
 The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
 Will make that pit of fire a refreshing lake

Adrift on the waters of the great ocean
 In great danger from the monsters of the deep
 The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
 Will save you from drowning in the storm waves.

Standing on the top of Mount Meru
Should people want to push you down
The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
You are safe, not even a hair of your body is in danger.

Encircled and assaulted by pirates
Holding swords to wound and kill
The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
The sword blades will break in small pieces

Imprisoned or in iron chains
Hands and feet placed in a yoke
The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
Will release you into freedom

In the case of poisoning, being cursed or bewitched
Putting us in great danger
The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
Will build our ability to withstand

If a fierce and cruel yaksha
A poisonous naga or an unkind spirit
The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
Will prevent them from doing you any harm

With fierce wild animals all around you
Of terrible tusks and claws
The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
Will make them run far away

The poisonous snake or scorpion
The fire filling a room with smoke
The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
Just that sound will send them away

Lightening, thunder and dark clouds
Hail pouring down in torrents
The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
In a short time they will come to an end

Living beings in great distress
Oppressed by measureless suffering
The wonderful power of her understanding
Will rescue them in ten thousand different ways

Her miraculous power lacks nothing
The wisdom of her skilful means extends widely
There is no place in the ten directions in all the worlds
Where she does not appear

The paths to suffering realms
The hells the hungry spirits or the animals
The pain of birth, old age, sickness and death
Bit by bit they are purified and ended

Look of truth, look of purity
Look of unlimited wisdom
Look of love, look of compassion
The look that should be permanently honoured and practised.

Look of immaculate light and purity
The wisdom light which destroys darkness
Which masters disaster, fire and wind
And illumines the whole world

Heart of Compassion like the roll of thunder
Heart of Love like the gentle clouds
Water of nectar raining down
To put out the fire of afflictions

In the courtroom and the place of lawsuits
Where the military cause fear
The name of Avalokita said in mindfulness
Will cause enemies to become friends

The sound of wonder, the sound which observes the cries of the world
The supreme sound, the sound of the rising tide
The sound which goes beyond the sound of ordinary life
We should be permanently mindful of all of these

Every moment of mindfulness without doubt
The purity of the being of Avalokita
Is the place where we need to take refuge
In times of danger and the suffering of death

Let us bow deeply to one
Who has laid the causes for every possible happiness
Who looks on the world with eyes of love
Whose ocean of well-being cannot be measured.

Namo Avalokitesvaraya (3 times)

From The Great Compassion Repentance Service

Great Compassionate Avalokitesvara,

I pray you will guide me with your great vows.

I pray you will awaken me with your compassionate undertaking.

May I possess your fearless and complete enlightenment:

If I confront malicious people, may their malice be reformed.

If I confront violent people, may their violence be pacified.

If I confront those of evil and different views, may they be enlightened.

If I confront the ignorant, may they be granted great wisdom.

Great Compassionate Avalokitesvara.

I pray you will envelope me with your compassionate cloud.

I pray to realize your spirit of benefiting and relieving all beings.

To identify the needs of all beings through compassionate eyes.

To listen to the sufferings of all beings with attentive ears.

To comfort the frustrations and anxieties of all beings with soothing words.

To heal the wounds of all beings with gentle hands.

Great Compassionate Avalokitesvara.

I pray you will illuminate us with your light of wisdom.

I pray I will be able to assist all beings through joyous giving.

I pray I will be able to awaken and guide the stubborn and obstinate through cooperative respect.

I pray I will be able to provide people with expediency through benevolent care.

I pray I will be able to provide people with happiness through words of loving-kindness.

Great Compassionate Avalokitesvara.

I pray to adopt your deliverance and non-hindrance as my model.

From this day forth:

I will distance myself from perverted and delusive thoughts, and contemplate freedom amongst humanity.

I will distance myself from discrimination and speculation, and contemplate freedom amidst my surroundings.

I will distance myself from attachment and entanglement, and contemplate freedom within circumstances.

I will distance myself from the five worldly desires,
and contemplate freedom of heart and mind.
Great Compassionate Avalokitesvara,
please accept my sincerest prayer.
Great Compassionate Avalokitesvara,
please accept my sincerest prayer.

The Great Compassion Dharani

Dai Hi Shu

Adoration to the three treasures-
Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha!
Adoration to Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva,
the Bodhisattva of Compassion!
Adoration to the one who removes all fear and suffering!
Having adored Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva,
may we now recite this glorious dharani which purifies all beings, which
fulfills the wishes of all beings.

Hail to the Bodhisattva Mahasattva who embodies the Trikaya, who has the
transcendental wisdom.
Hail to the Bodhisattva Mahasattva who continues to save all beings without
defilement in his mind.
Hail to the Bodhisattva Mahasattva who sustains the highest, the most
complete wisdom and who is free from all impediments.
Hail to the Bodhisattva Mahasattva whose deeds reveal the fundamental
purity of all beings.
Hail to the Bodhisattva Mahasattva, who wipes away the three evil delusions
- greed, anger, and folly.

Quick, quick! Come, come! Here, here!
A joy springs up in us. Help us to enter into the realm of great realization.
Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, Bodhisattva of Compassion, guide us to
spiritual contentment.
Accomplishment, accomplishment!
Having testified to the freedom and compassion of the mind of
Avalokitesvara,
Having purified our own body and mind,
Having become as brave as a lion,
Having become manifest into all beings,
Having attained to the Wheel of Dharma and the Lotus Flower, we can now
save all beings without hindrance.

May the understanding of the mysterious nature of Avalokitesvara prevail forever, ever and ever.

Adoration to the three treasures –

Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha!

Adoration to Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva,
the Bodhisattva of Compassion!

May this dharani be effective.

Hail!

Evoking the Bodhisattva's Names

We evoke your name, Avalokiteshvara. We aspire to learn your way of listening in order to help relieve the suffering in the world. You know how to listen in order to understand. We evoke your name in order to practice listening with all our attention and open-heartedness. We will sit and listen without any prejudice. We shall sit and listen without judging or reacting. We will sit and listen in order to understand. We will sit and listen so attentively that we will be able to hear what the other person is saying and also what has been left unsaid. We know that just by listening deeply we already alleviate a great deal of pain and suffering in the other person.

(bell) ...

We evoke your name, Manjushri. We aspire to learn your way, which is to be still and to look deeply into the heart of things and into the hearts of people. We will look with all our attention and open-heartedness. We will look with unprejudiced eyes. We will look without judging or reacting. We will look deeply so that we will be able to see and understand the roots of ill-being, the impermanent and selfless nature of all that is. We will practice your way of using the sword of understanding to cut through the bonds of ill-being, thus freeing ourselves and other species.

(bell) ...

We evoke your name, Samantabhadra. We aspire to practice your aspiration to act with the eyes and heart of compassion. We vow to bring joy to one person in the morning and to ease the pain of one person in the afternoon. We know that the happiness of others is our own happiness, and we vow to practice joy on the path of service. We know that every word, every look, every action, and every smile can bring happiness to others. We know that if we practice wholeheartedly, we ourselves may become an inexhaustible source of peace and joy for our loved ones and for all species.

(three sounds of the bell) ...

May the Day Be Well and the Night Be Well

May the day be well and the night be well.
May the midday hour bring happiness too.
In every minute and every second,
may the day and night be well.
By the blessing of the Triple Gem,
may all things be protected and safe.

May all beings born in each of the four ways
live in a land of purity.
May all in the Three Realms be born upon
lotus thrones.
May countless wandering souls
realize the three virtuous positions of the
Bodhisattva Path.

May all living beings, with grace and ease,
fulfill the Bodhisattva Stages.

The countenance of the World-Honored One,
like the full moon
or like the orb of the sun,
shines with the light of clarity.
A halo of wisdom spreads in every direction,
enveloping all with love and compassion,
joy and equanimity.

Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya
Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya
Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya

From the Plum Village Chanting and Recitation Book

Beginning anew

With great respect, we turn towards Sakyamuni Buddha,
the conqueror of afflictions.
We have lived in forgetfulness for a long time, as we have not had
the opportunity to encounter the Dharma.
We have brought about our sufferings.
We have been blinded by our wrong perceptions for a very long time.
Our heart's garden sown with attachment, hatred, and pride.
In us are seeds of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lies.
All these wrong actions are obstacles to our peace and joy.
Let's us begin anew.

(bell)

We are often thoughtless, straying from the path of mindfulness.
We are a storehouse of suffering, worries, and anxieties due to wrong
perceptions.
And we have become weary of life.
Because we do not understand others, we maintain ill-will against them.
Even after our dispute with them has been resolved,
we continue to feel enmity, making the rift greater.
There are days when we are unwilling to speak to each other, unwilling to
look
each other in the face, and we create internal formations.
Now we turn to the Three Jewels.
Sincerely recognizing our errors, we bow our heads.

(bell)

We know so well that in our consciousness are buried all the wholesome seeds—
seeds of love and understanding and seeds of peace and joy.
But if we do not know to water them, and we always allow sorrow to overwhelm them.
How can they spring up and green?
When we chase after a distant happiness,
life becomes but a shadow of the reality.
Our mind is always occupied by the past or worrying about this and that in the future.
We cannot let go of our anger,
and we long for what we have to be permanent,
thereby trampling on real happiness.
As month follows month, we are sunk in sorrow.
So now we recognize our errors and begin anew, fragrant as a breath of fresh air.

(bell)

With all our heart we go for refuge, turning to the Buddha in the ten directions
and all the bodhisattvas, noble disciples, and self-achieved Buddha.
Very sincerely we recognize our errors and the mistakes of our wrong judgments.
Please bring the balm of clear water to pour on the roots of our afflictions.
Please bring the raft of the true teachings to carry us over the ocean of sorrows.
We vow to live an awakened life, to learn the path of true happiness and to practice smiling
and conscious breathing.
Diligently, we live in mindfulness.

(bell)

We come back to live in the wonderfulness present;
to plant our heart's garden with good seeds;
and to make strong foundations of understanding and love.

We follow the way of mindfulness,
the practice of looking and understanding deeply to be able to see the nature
of all that is,
and so to be free of the bonds of birth and death.

We learn to speak lovingly, to be affectionate,
to care for others whether it is early morning or late afternoon,
to bring the roots of joy to many places, helping people to abandon sorrow;
to respond with deep gratitude to the kindness of parents, teachers, and
friends.

(bell)

We ask the Lord of Compassion to be our protector on the wonderful path of
practice.

We vow to practice all aspects of the path with energy so that our practice
may bear fruit.

(three sounds of the bell)

The Refuge Chant

At the foot of the Bodhi tree,
beautifully seated, peaceful and smiling,
the living source of understanding and compassion,
to the Buddha I go for refuge.

(bell)

The path of mindful living,
leading to healing, joy and enlightenment,
the way of peace,
to the Dharma I go for refuge.

(bell)

The loving and supporting community of practice,
realizing harmony, awareness, and liberation,
to the Sangha I go for refuge.

(bell)

I am aware that the three gems are within my heart.
I vow to realize them.
I vow to practice mindful breathing and smiling,
looking deeply into things.
I vow to understand living beings and their suffering,
to cultivate compassion and loving kindness,
and to practice joy and equanimity.

(bell)

I vow to offer joy to one person in the morning
and to help relieve the grief of one person in the afternoon.
I vow to live simply and sanely, content with just a few possessions,
and to keep my body healthy.
I vow to let go of all worries and anxiety
in order to be light and free.

(bell)

I am aware that I owe much to my parents,
teachers, friends and all beings.
I vow to be worthy of their trust,
to practice wholeheartedly,
so that understanding and compassion will flower,
and I can help living beings be free from their suffering.
May the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha
support my efforts.

(three sounds of the bell)

Sutra Opening Verse

The Dharma is deep and lovely.
We now have a chance to see, study, and to practice it.
We vow to realize its true meaning.

Sutra Closing Verse

Reciting the sutras, practicing the way of awareness
gives rise to benefits without limit.
We vow to share the fruits with all beings.
We vow to offer tribute to parents, teachers,
friends, and numerous beings
who give guidance and support along the path.

Incense Offering

In gratitude, we offer this incense to all buddhas and bodhisattvas
throughout space and time.
May it be fragrant as Earth herself, reflecting our careful efforts, our
wholehearted awareness, and the fruit of understanding, slowly ripening.
May we and all beings be companions of buddhas and bodhisattvas.
May we awaken from forgetfulness and realize our true home.

(bell)

Bowing

Teaching and living the way of awareness in the very midst of suffering and
confusion, Sakyamuni Buddha the Awakened One, to whom we bow in
gratitude.

(bell)

Cutting through ignorance, awakening our hearts and our minds, Manjusri
the Bodhisattva of Great Understanding to whom we bow in gratitude.

(bell)

Working mindfully, working joyfully for the sake of all beings,
Samantabhadra the Bodhisattva of Great Action, to whom we bow in
gratitude.

(bell)

Responding to suffering, serving beings in countless ways, Avalokiteshvara,
the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, to whom we bow in gratitude.

(bell)

Seed of awakening and loving kindness in children, sprouts and all beings,
Maitreya, the Buddha to be born, to whom we bow in gratitude.

(bell)

Showing the way fearlessly and compassionately the stream of all our
ancestral teachers, to whom we bow in gratitude.

(two sounds of the bell)

A Prayer Thich Nhat Hahn, 1976

As we are together, praying for Peace, let us truly be with each other. Let us pay attention to our breathing. Let us be at peace with our bodies and minds. Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves. Let us maintain a half-smile on our faces.

Let us be aware of the source of being common to us all and to all living things. Evoking the presence of the Great Compassion, let us fill our hearts with our own compassion—toward others and towards all living beings. Let us pray that all living things realize that they are all brothers and sisters, all nourished from the same source of life.

Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be the cause of suffering to each other. Let us plead with ourselves to live in a way which will not deprive other living beings of air, food, shelter, or a chance to live. With humility, with awareness of the existence of life, and of the sufferings that are going on around us, let us pray for the establishment of peace in our hearts and on earth. Amen.

Prayer in Pure Land Buddhism

From An Introduction to Pure Land Buddhism, by J.C. Cleary

Pure Land Buddhism centers on faith in Amitabha Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light Infinite Life. Amitabha has promised rebirth in his Pure Land to all those who singlemindedly invoke his name. Amitabha's Pure Land, called "The Land of Ultimate Bliss," is a pure realm where the ills of our world do not exist. Once reborn in the Pure Land, we are freed from the defilements and fixations that block the path to enlightenment here in our mundane world, and we can continue our spiritual progress under the direct tutelage of Amitabha and the assembly of saints and sages.

Pure Land believers show their faith in Amitabha's promise by taking a vow to be reborn in Amitabha's Pure Land. They practice their faith by reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha, ('Namo Amitofu!' or, 'Namo Amitabha Buddha' – 'Homage to Amitabha Buddha') by contemplating his qualities, and by visualizing his image.

Selections from 'Pure Land Buddhism – The Path of Serene Trust'

Praising a Buddha's virtues and keeping a Buddha in mind at all times has been practiced since the earliest days of Buddhism. Indeed, the act of taking refuge in the Buddha means to put one's trust in the Buddha as an honored teacher. In the Pratyutpanna Sutra, an early Buddhist text, Shakyamuni Buddha talks about the practice of Pratyutpanna Samadhi, in which one can directly perceive the Buddhas of the Ten Directions face to face.

The object of Pure Land Buddhism is rebirth into the Realm of Bliss. This may be seen as literal rebirth into the Buddha-realm called Sukhavati and/or as experiencing the direct realization of the realm of the Purified Mind, in which a person becomes one with the limitless Compassion and Wisdom which are the prime characteristics of Buddha Amitabha.

Pure Land Buddhism rests on the following tripod: Faith; Aspiration or the Vow for Rebirth; and Practice - single-minded effort aimed at Buddha Remembrance Samadhi, "Buddhanusmrti" in Sanskrit, "Nien-Fo" in Chinese. Buddhanusmrti means "To stay mindful of the Buddha," and has been a central practice of Pure Land Buddhism since its beginnings. Nien-Fo also refers to the recitation of the Buddha's name, among other practices.

The Pure Land tripod of Faith, Aspiration and Practice was modified in 12th century Japan. The 18th vow of Dharmakara was interpreted to mean that one only need to recite Amitabha's name to attain rebirth (see next section). The teacher Shinran further narrowed this interpretation to say that the Nembutsu (Japanese for Nien-Fo) is recited until the Mind of Faith manifests itself, and that faith in Amida Buddha (the Japanese term for Amitabha) is sufficient for rebirth. The Japanese Pure Land schools are still characterized as "faith-only" schools, while classical Pure Land Buddhism still relies on the tripod of Faith, Aspiration and Practice as expedients.

Whenever Pure Land Buddhism is discussed these two important concepts usually arise. Self-Power refers to methods we practice on our own, the power of our own mind. Other-Power refers to the power of the vows of

Amitabha Buddha which facilitate rebirth in the Realm of Bliss, as well as the manifestation of these vows through the transference of Amitabha's own merit to us.

In classical Pure Land Buddhism, Self-Power and Other-Power work together. Through recitation, meditation and visualization practices, vowing to be reborn and manifesting the mind of faith, we attain Buddha Remembrance Samadhi, uniting one's Self-Power with the Other-Power of Buddha Amitabha, the essence of Universal Compassion and Wisdom.

In Japanese Pure Land Buddhism however, there is an exclusive reliance on Other-Power. Reciting the Buddha's name with faith is all that is necessary, and Other-Power practices are seen as essentially useless. A person is totally reliant on the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha; essentially, the saying of the Buddha's name arises solely from the power of Amida's vows. This causes Japanese Pure Land to be more of a salvation-based form, unlike the classical Pure Land Buddhism that originally developed in China.

Recitation is one of the central practices of Pure Land Buddhism. It involves the concentrated and heartfelt repetitive recitation of "Namo Amitabha Buddha" (Homage to the Buddha of Boundless Compassion and Wisdom). In Chinese this phrase is "Namo Omīto-Fo," in Japanese, "Namu Amida Butsu."

A quote by Master T'ien-Ju Wei-Tse

"Do not let your thought be separated from the Buddha, nor the Buddha be separated from your thought. Then you will see the Buddha manifesting himself in your presence through the mutual response. After seeing the Buddha of the Pure Land, you will also see Buddhas in the Ten Directions; after seeing the Buddhas in the Ten Directions, you will perceive the Buddha of your own nature. After perceiving the Buddha of your own nature, you will attain the Great Function. Thereafter, you will be able to exert your compassionate vows to teach all sentient beings. This is called the Ch'an of the Pure Land, or the Pure Land of Ch'an."

Self Power, Other Power I – from the Amitabha Pureland website

Throughout history, the Patriarchs have elaborated various systems to categorize Dharma methods and the sutras in which they are expounded. One convenient division is into methods based on self-effort (self-power) and those rely on the assistance of the Buddhas and Budhisattvas (other-power).

Traditionally, most Buddhist schools and methods take the self-power approach: progress along the path of Enlightenment is achieved only through intense and sustained personal effort. Because of the dedication and effort involved schools of this self-power, self-effort tradition all have a distinct monastic bias.

The laity has generally played only a supportive role, which the most spiritually advanced ideally joining the Order of monks and nuns. Best known of these traditions are Theravada and Zen.

Parallel to this, particularly following the development of Mahayana thought and the rise of any Buddhism, a more flexible tradition eventually came into being, combine *self-power* with *other-power* - the assistance and support provided by the Buddhas and Budhisattvas to sincere seekers of the way.

Most representative of this tradition are the Esoteric and Pure Land schools. However unlike the former (or Zen), Pure Land does not stress the master-disciple relationship and de-emphasizes the role of sub-schools, gurus/roshia and rituals. Moreover, the main aim of Pure Land - *rebirth in Buddha land through self effort and the power of Amitabha Buddha's Vows* (rather than attainment of Enlightenment or Buddhahood in the current lifetime) - is a realistic goal, though to be understood at several levels. Therein lies the appeal and strength of Pure Land.

Self Power, Other Power II – from Zen Philosophy, Zen Practice, by Thich Thien-An

Zen Buddhism emphasizes man's ability to develop himself through his own inner strength and states that by his determination and constant practice he can attain the state of enlightenment and spiritual perfection known as Buddhahood. This reliance upon one's own effort as the way to enlightenment is known as "self-power," and the philosophy of self-power forms the basis for practice in both the Rinzai and Soto schools of Zen. However, Buddhism includes not only the conception of self-power, but also the conception of an "other-power," the compassionate power radiating from the heart of Amita Buddha, the glorified Buddha of the Great Vehicle. The philosophy of the "other-power" provides the central conception of Pure Land Buddhism, a devotional form of Buddhism which flourished in China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan. But the concept of the other-power is not altogether foreign to Zen. In Zen Buddhism there have been attempts to fuse the concepts of self-power and other-power into a synthetic whole, and the result of this synthesis has been very fruitful for both theory and practice.

The union of self-power and other-power runs throughout the practice of Zen in China and Vietnam, and while the two main Japanese Zen sects, Rinzai and Soto, tend to emphasize self-power exclusively, there is a third sect called Obaku Zen, which takes the fusion of the two powers as its basic method of cultivation. Some scholars, such as D. T. Suzuki, do not regard the reliance upon the "other" as authentic Zen, but this author's viewpoint is different. Any method which leads to the calming and purification of the mind and the realization of our true nature can be considered as Zen. Zen is the Japanese equivalent of the Sanskrit word dhyana, "concentration" or "meditation." If the method of combining self-power and other-power as practiced in the syncretic Zen schools leads to the attainment of a concentrated mind and the opening of enlightenment, then that method is legitimate Zen.

The methods of self-power and other-power were both originally taught by Sakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. According to the teaching of the Buddha, every living being has a Buddha nature. Therefore, it is within the potential of every man to realize that Buddha nature and to become enlightened. But to reach that state is a tremendously difficult task, calling for dauntless courage and unflinching will power. Thus, very few people are capable of reaching enlightenment by themselves; very few have the required spiritual qualification. For the majority of people it is necessary to rely upon the help of others, and here we find the germ of the "other-power" schools.

It is as if a boat were wrecked while floating down a river. Those who are good swimmers would be able to save themselves, but what are they to do who cannot swim as well! They must call for help and rely upon a better swimmer to bring them to the safety of the riverbank. In other words, they must rely upon someone else to save them. Similarly, while we all have the potential to become Buddhas, very few can accomplish Buddhahood through their own unaided striving. Most must rely upon the help of others to reach the safe shore of enlightenment.

In Obaku Zen and the Pure Land schools, practitioners rely upon the compassionate power of Amita Buddha. This may sound rather remote from orthodox Zen, but if we consider the matter carefully, we will find that the difference between Obaku Zen and Pure Land Buddhism on the one hand, and the Rinzai and Soto Zen schools on the other, is only a difference of degree, not of kind. Practice in Rinzai and Soto requires the Master to teach the student how to sit, how to discipline his mind, how to work with the koan or practice shikantaza, and he depends upon the wisdom and spiritual skill of the Master to guide him to enlightenment.

Without the constant prodding of the Master, how many people would reach satori! True, the Zen master cannot give enlightenment, but still he stands as a hand reaching to the disciple from the "other shore," ever ready to extend to him whatever help he requires. Now if the Zen master is able to assist in the struggle to reach enlightenment, then how much more help can we

expect from the Master who has reached Perfect Enlightenment, the Buddha! The Zen master can help because he has realized a certain amount of wisdom and compassion. And so the Buddha can provide us with inexhaustible help because he has reached the state of perfect wisdom and infinite compassion. Even the very existence of the path of self-power is in a sense due to the "other-power" of the Buddha. For it was the Buddha who in his compassion taught the path to enlightenment and thereby made that path accessible to mankind. The Buddha is the person who helps us by showing us the Way, and we are the persons who work and practice it by ourselves. That is a union of self-power and other-power. If the self-power and other-power work together to assist each other, then we can go anywhere, reach anywhere we wish. By fusing these two powers in our daily practice, we can enter the gates of enlightenment and abide in the city of Nirvana.

According to the Buddha, there were in the past other Buddhas who were his predecessors, and there will be in the future other Buddhas who will be his successors. The Buddha who is the primary focus of devotion in the Pure Land schools and in Obaku Zen is a Buddha of the remote past called Amita Buddha. Many aeons ago, the story told by Sakyamuni Buddha goes, there lived a Bodhisattva named Dharmakara, who practiced the meditations of compassion and loving-kindness. In his meditation he saw that all living beings are subject to suffering, to the sorrows of birth, old age, illness and death. Witnessing this suffering aroused in him a great compassion, and out of this compassion he vowed that when he attained Buddhahood he would create a special paradise in the Western region where there would be no more suffering.

Through the power of his vow he would enable any living being recollecting his name and calling upon his help to be reborn in the Western paradise. Since the Bodhisattva Dharmakara, after several long aeons of self-cultivation, did attain Perfect Enlightenment and become the Buddha Amita, this means that his Great Vow is now a reality. The paradise has been established and is accessible to all who with a mind of sincere faith take refuge in the compassion and grace of Amita Buddha.

The Western paradise is not, however, the final goal for the Pure Land Buddhist, not even for those who seek rebirth there. Rather, it is an intermediary abode where the most favorable conditions for self-cultivation have been set up and secured. While there are some men who by practicing can reach enlightenment in this world, many find difficult obstacles confronting them along the path. The necessity for work, the attractions of the senses, the threat of illness and infirmity and the gross entanglements of materiality all stand as barriers across our path. In the Western Paradise none of these barriers are present. Everything there is radiant, peaceful and beautiful. No defilements can be found, for all shines with purity. Therefore, the country of Amita Buddha is called the Pure Land. Those who are reborn into the Pure Land dwell in the midst of lotus flowers. They are always in the presence of Amita Buddha and the assemblies of Bodhisattvas presided over by the Bodhisattva Kwan-Yin, the embodiment of universal compassion. In the midst of these pure conditions it is easy to develop concentration and wisdom and attain Perfect Enlightenment.

The way to attain rebirth in the Western Paradise is by devotion to Amita Buddha. This devotion is expressed by reciting the sutras that teach about Amita, by chanting His Name, by meditating upon His Image and by calling to mind His Wisdom, Virtue and Compassion. Those who are capable of placing single-minded faith in the Great Vow of Amita will enter the Pure Land where they will meet all favorable conditions for practice and never again fall into this world of suffering. This way is called the "easy path" (Jap. *igyō*) in contrast to the "difficult path" (*nangyo*) of self-power. The practice of the "easy path" is very popular in China, Vietnam, Korea and Mongolia, and also in the Pure Land schools of Japan, the Jodoshu and the Jodoshinshu. Belief in the "otherpower" of the Buddha also helps us to develop our selfpower. Therefore, in the Far East a form of practice was developed by Mahayana Buddhists which combines formal meditation with the chanting of the Buddha's name.

In this method the practitioners sit before an image of the Buddha and chant the Buddha's name, quietly and calmly, while at the same time meditating upon the Buddha image or an internalized visualization of the Buddha. As the mind deepens in meditation, a point is reached where subject and object

become one. No longer is the Buddha the object and the meditator the subject, but the meditator becomes one with the Buddha. When this happens, this is the state of "One Mind Samadhi," and here there is no longer any distinction between Zen and Pure Land, self-power or other-power, wisdom or compassion, for all has become merged into the brightness of the Infinite Light.

According to a popular Buddhist belief, whenever a person aspires to become a Buddhist, a lotus-flower blossoms in the Pure Land. When a person becomes a Buddhist, this means that he is beginning to practice the way of wisdom, compassion and virtue, so by the operation of the law of cause and effect, in the perfect world created by the compassion of Amita Buddha, a lotus flower, the symbol of inner spiritual awakening, awaits his rebirth into the realm of spiritual perfection. The Western paradise is called the Pure Land because it is the land of purity, and all who are reborn there are pure. Everything in the Pure Land teaches the Dharma. Even the birds sing the songs of the Dharma, the rivers hum sutras as they go flowing by and flowers blossom in harmony with the blossoming of wisdom. In the Pure Land everything is a stepping stone on the way to Perfect Enlightenment.

This concept is similar to the teaching of Zen. In Zen we do not learn only from a book or teacher, but from everything, and we do not learn only in a temple or a meditation center, but everywhere. For Zen is experience itself, the truth of life as it is ever flowing by and encompassing us on all sides. So if we approach life with an open mind, everything can be our teacher. The way of Zen is not a withdrawal from life, but the realization of truth in all the activities of everyday life. We can learn from our fellow men, from the arts. This is why Zen developed the cultivation of such arts as gardening, poetry, painting, tea ceremony and flower arrangement -- as expressions of and keys to the attainment of enlightenment. Zen has even found a vehicle in the martial arts. The first supporters of Zen when it was introduced from China to Japan were the samurai, the warrior class, who found in Zen's emphasis on self-control and equanimity of mind a method of discipline conducive to their own ends. Zen has also influenced the development of techniques of self-defense like judo and karate. The principle underlying

these different applications of Zen is that any field of activity can serve as a means for realizing the truth of Zen. In the same way, according to the Pure Land teaching, everything in the Paradise of Amita Buddha is a teacher of the Dharma.

There are three methods of meditation practiced in the combined Zen-Pure Land schools. The first is the chanting of the Buddha's name. The second method is the meditation upon the form of the Buddha. The follower chooses a particularly appealing image of the Buddha and begins by focusing upon that image until he can picture it clearly for himself; then he closes his eyes and tries to visualize the form of the Buddha internally. The third method is to meditate upon the virtues of the Buddha. The Buddha is the embodiment of perfect wisdom and infinite compassion. Either one or both of these virtues together may be taken as the subject of practice. If we choose the compassion of the Buddha, we reflect that the Buddha's compassion makes no distinction between subject and object or between enemies and friends, but pours down upon all equally.

This compassion is different from ordinary love. Ordinary love works according to various discriminations: we love ourselves, but not others; our relatives, but not strangers; our friends, but not enemies. However, the compassion of the Buddha extends equally to everyone. Like the Buddha, we should extend our love and compassion outward to all alike, to everyone everywhere, without making any distinctions. Again, if we choose to meditate on the Buddha's wisdom, we imagine the light of wisdom radiating from the figure of the Buddha and growing larger and larger and brighter and brighter until it merges with our own inner light. At this point we and the Buddha become one. When this stage is reached, then this world will become transformed into the Pure Land, this Samsara become Nirvana, and all the bliss and purity of the Western paradise become realized in the here and now of everyday life. Here the Zen and Pure Land schools meet in that common center from which they both emanate, the One Mind of Buddha, which is our own true and permanent Essence of Mind.

Prayers From 'A Daily Pure Land Practice'

Namo Amitabha Buddha!

Namo Kuan-Shih-Yin P'u Sa!

Namo Tai-Shih-Chih P'u Sa!

Namo Sacred Beings of the Pure Land!

Praise to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Sacred Beings of the Ten Directions and Three Times!

There follows Recitation/Visualization Practice. Recitation involves verbal repetition, either silently or aloud, of "Namo Amitabha Buddha," "Namo Amitabha," or "Amitabha." And the Pure Land is visualized.

There follows the Dedication of Merit

Dedication of Merit

May the merits of the practice be shared by all sentient beings.

May the beings of all worlds accept this Pure Land practice.

May we accumulate innumerable merit in this very lifetime.

May we be welcomed into the Pure Land by Amitabha Buddha when we depart this world.

May we be reborn into the Pure Realm of Bliss and realize our own Buddha Nature.

Vows For Rebirth Into the Realm of Bliss

I vow to be reborn into the Western Pure Realm of Bliss.

I vow to see Buddha Amitabha and the Bodhisattvas of Compassion and Wisdom at the end of this life.

I vow to transcend birth and death so I may rescue all sentient beings
And lead them all from suffering to complete Enlightenment.

Part IV. Prayers in the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition

Verses for Training the Mind

The Four Immeasurables

May all beings have happiness, and the causes of happiness

May all beings be free from suffering, and the causes of suffering

I rejoice in the virtues of living beings

All are equal in deserving our love, and our care

Eight Verses for Training the Mind, by Geshe Langri Tangpa

1. With a determination to accomplish the highest welfare for living beings,
who each surpass even a wish-fulfilling jewel
in their preciousness,
I will learn to hold them all supremely dear

2. When among others, I will think of myself
as lowest among all,
and will hold others to be supreme,
from the very depths of my heart

3. I will learn to search into my mind,
and as soon as an afflictive emotion arises,
endangering both self and others,
I will firmly face and avert it.

4. When meeting with those
who have especially strong sins and suffering,
I will learn to cherish them
as if I had found a precious treasure,
very difficult to find

5. When others treat me badly,
with slander, abuse, and so on,
I will accept all loss
and offer the victory to them

6. When one I have benefitted hurts me,
I will learn to view that one as my own Supreme Guru

7. In short, I will learn to offer all help and happiness
to all beings,
both directly and indirectly,
and I will remove as much suffering
as these beings may have

8. I will keep these practices undiminished
by the usual worldly preoccupations,
and by knowing appearances to be
like illusions,
I will be without the limitations
that accompany ego-grasping

The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas

by Togmay Sangpo

Translation by Ruth Sonam

Homage to Lokeshwara

I pay constant homage through my three doors,
 To my supreme teacher and protector Chenrezig,
 Who while seeing all phenomena lack coming and going,
 Makes single-minded effort for the good of living beings.
 Perfect Buddhas, source of all well-being and happiness,
 Arise from accomplishing the excellent teachings,
 And this depends on knowing the practices.
 So I will explain the practices of Bodhisattvas.

1. Having gained this rare ship of freedom and fortune,
 Hear, think and meditate unwaveringly night and day
 In order to free yourself and others
 From the ocean of cyclic existence--
 This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

2. Attached to your loved ones you're stirred up like water.
 Hating your enemies you burn like fire.
 In the darkness of confusion you forget what to adopt and discard.
 Give up your homeland--
 This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

3. By avoiding bad objects, disturbing emotions gradually decrease.
 Without distraction, virtuous activities naturally increase.
 With clarity of mind, conviction in the teaching arises.
 Cultivate seclusion--
 This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

4. Loved ones who have long kept company will part.
Wealth created with difficulty will be left behind.
Consciousness, the guest, will leave the guest-house of the body.
Let go of this life--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

5. When you keep their company your three poisons increase,
Your activities of hearing, thinking and meditating decline,
And they make you lose your love and compassion.
Give up bad friends--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

6. When you rely on them your faults come to an end
And your good qualities grow like the waxing moon.
Cherish spiritual teachers
Even more than your own body--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

7. Bound himself in the jail of cyclic existence,
What worldly god can give you protection?
Therefore when you seek refuge, take refuge in
The Three Jewels which will not betray you--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

8. The Subduer said all the unbearable suffering
Of bad rebirths is the fruit of wrong-doing.
Therefore, even at the cost of your life,
Never do wrong--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

9. Like dew on the tip of a blade of grass, pleasures of the three worlds
Last only a while and then vanish.
Aspire to the never-changing
Supreme state of liberation--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

10. When your mothers, who've loved you since time without beginning,
Are suffering, what use is your own happiness?
Therefore to free limitless living beings
Develop the altruistic intention--
This the practice of Bodhisattvas.

11. All suffering comes from the wish for your own happiness.
Perfect Buddhas are born from the thought to help others.
Therefore exchange your own happiness
For the suffering of others--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

12. Even if someone out of strong desire
Steals all your wealth or has it stolen,
Dedicate to him your body, possessions
And your virtue, past, present, and future--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

13. Even if someone tries to cut off your head
When you haven't done the slightest thing wrong,
Out of compassion take all his misdeeds
Upon yourself--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

14. Even if someone broadcasts all kinds of unpleasant remarks
About you throughout the three thousand worlds,
In return, with a loving mind,
Speak of his good qualities--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

15. Though someone may deride and speak bad words
About you in a public gathering,
Looking on him as a spiritual teacher,
Bow to him with respect--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

16. Even if a person for whom you've cared
Like your own child regards you as an enemy,
Cherish him specially, like a mother
Does her child who is stricken by sickness--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

17. If an equal or inferior person
Disparages you out of pride,
Place him, as you would your spiritual teacher,
With respect on the crown of your head--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

18. Though you lack what you need and are constantly disparaged,
Afflicted by dangerous sickness and spirits,
Without discouragement take on the misdeeds
And the pain of all living beings--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

19. Though you become famous and many bow to you,
And you gain riches to equal Vaishravana's,
See that worldly fortune is without essence,
And be unconceited--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

20. While the enemy of your own anger is unsubdued,
Though you conquer external foes, they will only increase.
Therefore with the militia of love and compassion
Subdue your own mind--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

21. Sensual pleasures are like saltwater:
The more you indulge, the more thirst increases.
Abandon at once those things which breed
Clinging attachment--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

22. Whatever appears is your own mind.
Your mind from the start was free from fabricated extremes.
Understanding this, do not take to mind
[Inherent] signs of subject and object--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.
23. When you encounter attractive objects,
Though they seem beautiful
Like a rainbow in summer, don't regard them as real
And give up attachment--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.
24. All forms of suffering are like a child's death in a dream.
Holding illusory appearances to be true makes you weary.
Therefore when you meet with disagreeable circumstances,
See them as illusory--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.
25. When those who want enlightenment must give even their body,
There's no need to mention external things.
Therefore without hope for return or any fruition
Give generously--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.
26. Without ethics you can't accomplish your own well-being,
So wanting to accomplish others' is laughable.
Therefore without worldly aspirations
Safeguard your ethical discipline
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.
27. To Bodhisattvas who want a wealth of virtue
Those who harm are like a precious treasure.
Therefore towards all cultivate patience
Without hostility--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

28. Seeing even Hearers and Solitary Realizers, who accomplish
Only their own good, strive as if to put out a fire on their head,
For the sake of all beings make enthusiastic effort,
The source of all good qualities--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

29. Understanding that disturbing emotions are destroyed
By special insight with calm abiding,
Cultivate concentration which surpasses
The four formless absorptions--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

30. Since the five perfections without wisdom
Cannot bring perfect enlightenment,
Along with skillful means cultivate the wisdom
Which does not conceive the three spheres [as real]--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

31. If you don't examine your own errors,
You may look like a practitioner but not act as one.
Therefore, always examining your own errors,
Rid yourself of them--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

32. If through the influence of disturbing emotions
You point out the faults of another Bodhisattva,
You yourself are diminished, so don't mention the faults
Of those who have entered the Great Vehicle--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

33. Reward and respect cause us to quarrel
And make hearing, thinking and meditation decline.
For this reason give up attachment to
The households of friends, relations and benefactors--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

34. Harsh words disturb the minds of others
And cause deterioration in a Bodhisattva's conduct.
Therefore give up harsh words
Which are unpleasant to others--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

35. Habitual disturbing emotions are hard to stop through counteractions.
Armed with antidotes, the guards of mindfulness and mental alertness
Destroy disturbing emotions like attachment
At once, as soon as they arise--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

36. In brief, whatever you are doing,
Ask yourself 'What's the state of my mind?'
With constant mindfulness and mental alertness
Accomplish others' good--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

37. To remove the suffering of limitless beings,
Understanding the purity of the three spheres,
Dedicate the virtue from making such effort
To enlightenment--
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

For all who want to train on the Bodhisattva path,
I have written The thirty-seven Practices of Bodhisattvas,
Following what has been said by the excellent ones
On the meaning of the sutras, tantras and treatises.
Though not poetically pleasing to scholars
Owing to my poor intelligence and lack of learning,
I've relied on the sutras and the words of the excellent,
So I think these Bodhisattva practices are without error.
However, as the great deeds of Bodhisattvas
Are hard to fathom for one of my poor intelligence,
I beg the excellent to forgive all faults,
Such as contradictions and non sequiturs.

Through the virtue from this may all living beings
Gain the ultimate and conventional altruistic intention
And thereby become like the Protector Chenrezig
Who dwell in neither extreme--not in the world nor in peace.

This was written for his own and others' benefit by the monk Togmay, an exponent of scripture and reasoning, in a cave in Ngulchu Rinchen.

Lam Rim Prayers

The Foundation of All Good Qualities, by Tsong-Khapa

The foundation of all good qualities is the kind and venerable guru.
Correctly devoting to him is the root of the path.
By clearly seeing this and applying great effort,
Please bless me to rely on him with great respect.

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

This life is impermanent like 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 negativities
and to 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 migratory beings.
Bless me to see this, train in supreme bodhicitta
and bear the responsibility of freeing migratory beings.

By clearly recognizing that developing bodhicitta
without practicing the three types of morality
I will not achieve enlightenment
Please bless me to practice the bodhisattva vows with great energy.

By pacifying distractions to wrong objects
and correctly analyzing 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
Having 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
which are 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 virtuous gurus who show the noble path
and the spiritual friends who practice it have long lives
Please bless me to pacify completely
all inner and outer hindrances.

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

Lam Rim Prayer - Commentary by Anila Ann

I would like to read the prayer for the Glance Meditation and the Graduated Path, which is the Lam Rim. This was the first prayer I ever got. His Holiness, Ling Rinpoche, who was the Senior Tutor to the Dalai Lama at that time, was going to give an initiation in Yamantaka and then he was going to teach the Lam Rim. I thought -- "Initiation" -- I didn't have any initiations. So I was walking along with Lama Zopa and I said, "Do you think I should take that?" Now you know from me that if you're in the area, you take it, because it's so rare. And he said, "Hmmm." And we climbed way up this mountain "Raj Gere" -- not that big, about half-way up Grouse -- and we get up to the top and then he turns to me and says, "Well this Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, is the only Buddha of the thousand who are coming to this planet who is going to teach Tantra." Well you take it. And if you can't figure it out, you still take it.

So I go to another teacher and I say I'm going to take the initiation. He says, "Oh, that's good. You'll need a prayer." I'll need a prayer? He says, "Write this down." They were translating it for the first time, I think, into English. So mine is all upside down and backward and got edited and edited and edited so I can hardly see it anymore. Just relax and listen. This is as old as when I got this, which is twenty-some years ago.

There are a lot of things in there that need explanation but the fact is that if it's recited enough times, your own wisdom will cognise what it means. So just reciting this prayer is called direct meditation. You're scanning, you just keep scanning and scanning and scanning, and as you read and study, parts of this will make sense.

I take refuge in the Holy Guru, the essence of all Buddhas, the original granter of all holy teachings and the Lord of all Supreme Beings.

Please, O Guru Buddhas, enable me to unify my mind with the Dharma and to succeed in practising Dharma for receiving the Graduated Path.

May nothing prevent my receiving this path.

Please bless me to take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha with all my heart, and to practise virtue and abandon non-virtue.

Through realising that I have received a perfect human rebirth which is highly meaningful, for many reasons, difficult to obtain, but perishable, transient and fragile, decaying in the shortest second because of its changeable nature.

Thus, my death is definite but its actual time is most indefinite.
Karma is most profound.

Even in one hour I create more negative karma bringing rebirth in the suffering lower realms, than positive.

Even a small negative karma has so many suffering results and the ability of karma, created to bring its result, is never lost, even after more aeons than the ordinary mind can imagine.

And the sufferings of the three lower realms are very unimaginably unbearable.

Through practicing in this way I might be reborn in the upper realms, but would still have to experience unlimited samsaric suffering because of uncontrolled delusion and karma.

Please bestow upon me the ability to realise fully the evolution of samsara from uncontrolled rebirth to death and rebirth so that I shall follow day and night the threefold training of the path which is supreme conduct, supreme concentration, and supreme wisdom, the main method to release me from samsara.

But as each sentient being has been my mother and as most are in extreme suffering, please grant me blessings to bring success to all.

To renouncing the perfect self-happiness (nirvana) and practising the Bodhisattva's deeds with Bodhicitta on the basis of the equilibrium meditation.

Thus shall I have no sorrow in experiencing the samsaric sufferings of all other sentient beings for no matter how long, having trained my mind in the general path.

Please grant me blessings to be able to follow the quick Vajrayana teachings by feeling sentient beings' suffering, very unimaginable, unbearable, for even the shortest second, as my own.

And to attain the enlightenment of Arya Tara* immediately, at this very moment, by keeping my ordinations and the orders of the Guru with greater and better care than anything else in my life for the sole purpose of enlightening all sentient beings.

*It could be any deity; Chenrezig or Buddha.

Guru Yoga

From ‘An Introduction to Tantra: A Vision of Totality’, by Lama Yeshe

On Guru Yoga

Once we have received an initiation into the practice of a particular meditational deity we may begin our daily practice of that deity’s sadhana, and one of the first meditations of the sadhana is the practice of guru-yoga, done in a way similar to the following:

Either in front of us or above the crown of our head we visualize the main meditational deity of the tantra we are practicing surrounded by the various gurus of the lineage. These lineage gurus are the successive masters who have passed on the teachings and realizations of that particular practice and include everyone from the first master of the lineage through to our own spiritual guide, the guru from whom we received the empowerment.

We then request the members of this assembly to bestow their inspiration and blessings upon us and, in response to this request, they merge with one another, enter us through the crown of our head in the form of light, descend our central channel, and dissolve into our heart center. As this happens, all ordinary dualistic appearances and conceptions dissolve into the clear space of emptiness. We then meditate upon the feeling that our guru, who in essence is identical with the deity, and our own subtle consciousness have become indistinguishably one.

The essence of the guru is wisdom: the perfectly clear and radiant state of mind in which bliss and the realization of emptiness are inseparably unified. Therefore, when we visualize the guru absorbing into our heart we should feel that an indestructible impression of that wisdom is being made upon our

fundamental mind. From this time onwards we should try to recall this inner experience of great bliss and non-dual wisdom repeatedly, no matter what circumstances we may encounter. If we let our mindfulness of this inner experience deteriorate, we will easily fall under the influence of grosser sensory experiences and the inner bliss of non-dual wisdom will eventually vanish completely.

When we visualize our spiritual guide as the meditational deity we should think especially about his or her great kindness and concern for us. Simply speaking, although the guru-deity is not my father, not my mother, not my wife, not my husband, still, he is as concerned about me and my situation as if he were. It is as if he exists solely for my sake, so that I might develop a supremely healthy body and mind. This is how we should relate to the visualized guru-deity.

By visualizing in this way and thinking of the personal kindness shown to you by your guru, a powerful connection is established. Instead of being some vague, impersonal image, the deity is seen as being inseparable in essence from your own immeasurably kind spiritual guide. In this way a feeling of incredible closeness develops. Because of this feeling of intimacy and because the deity is visualized as a radiantly beautiful being of light, inspiration can come very quickly. Your visualization magnetically attracts such inspiration, such blessing, and this enables you to develop clear realizations. This, after all, is the entire point of the guru-yoga practice. The purpose for seeing the guru in an exalted aspect has nothing to do with benefiting the guru – a true guru has no use of such homage – but is solely to speed your own spiritual evolution.

Calling the Lama From Afar

Lama, think of me.

Lama, think of me.

Lama think of me.

Glorious Lama dispelling the darkness of ignorance;

Glorious Lama revealing the path of liberation;

Glorious Lama liberating from the waters of cyclic existence;

Glorious Lama dispelling the diseases of the five poisons;

Glorious Lama, wish-fulfilling gem.

Glorious Lama, please bless me to recall death and impermanence sincerely.

Glorious Lama, please bless me to generate contentment within myself.

Glorious Lama, please bless me to dwell in isolation in one-pointed practice.

Glorious Lama, please bless me to be free of any interruption to my practice.

Glorious Lama, please bless me so that all bad conditions appear as helpers.

Glorious Lama, please bless me to spontaneously achieve my own and
other's welfare.

Please bless me now quickly.

Please bless me very quickly.

Please bless me on this very cushion.

Please bless me in this very session!

A Prayer to Tsong Khapa

Avalokiteshvara, Great Treasure of Compassion not aimed at true existence
Manjushri, Lord of Stainless Wisdom,
as well as Vajrapani, destroyer of hoards of demons without exception,
Crown Jewel of the Sages of the Lands of Snows,
Tsong Khapa, to you I bow

Three Guru Yoga Prayers

Glorious and precious root Guru,
 who sits on a lotus – moon seat on the crown of my head,
 Out of your great kindness, having taken me as your disciple,
 Please grant me the accomplishments
 of the body, speech, and mind of a Buddha

* * *

I supplicate precious Lama
 May I be without self-grasping
 May I have contentment
 Just as you have done, may I develop love, compassion,
 and Supreme Bodhicitta
 Just as you have done, may I develop clarity and stability
 May all illusion and delusion be pacified in its own ground
 May all things be known as they are

* * *

May my bright and loving teacher
 move from the crown of my head,
 to my heart
 become one with my finest degree of consciousness,
 Enter into my bones, pathways,
 invisible energy systems
 Be like a sun for this earth
 clearly entering into
 every formation of consciousness

A Prayer by which to Recognise One's Own Faults and
Keep the Object of Refuge in Mind, A Very Pure Aspiration to be
Absolutely Clear as to What to Adopt and What to Abandon -
by H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche

Homage to the Guru!

Supreme Guide of the Universe in this Fortunate Kalpa, Conqueror
Shakyamuni,

Noble assembly of Bodhisattvas, Buddha–Sons, you who train beings,

Revered and Lordly Guru, unsurpassed protector of beings in this degenerate
age,

To the Three Roots and hosts of Dharma– and Oath–bound Protectors,

Thinking of you one–pointedly and with yearning hearts,

We continually pray, calling for your attention:

Holding us with your loving kindness and the power of your peerless and
unobstructed compassion,

Bless us that we attain our aims in accordance with Dharma.

By means of former acts by no means insignificant we have attained this
precious human body;

Due to merit by no means small we have met with the Holy Dharma;

Accepted by a Guru, we have received empowerments, blessings and pith–
instructions:

Though we hold such a jewel in our hands at this very time,
Our minds, childlike as monkeys,

Are continually taken in by the cunning demons of distraction
And we cannot use this wealth although it is our very own.
Freedoms, opportunities and pith–instructions have simply gone to waste.

Now we reach the crucial turning–point:

Everything we have requested and received has become like a story.

Putting on the appearance of Dharma, we even think we are practitioners

And yet this mind falls far short of perfect practice.

We do not even understand human Dharma — what need to speak of the
Buddhadharma!

With only the vaguest notion of the sixteen rules of correct human conduct,

Examining ourselves, we are without the slightest shame for our own bad
deeds.

When it comes to others, our patience is as short as the tail of the drawa
mouse,

And yet we are unable to act in accordance with the ten utterly pure virtues
of the Holy Dharma.

Full of sectarian bias though there is only the one Teacher and one Teaching,

We criticise Teachings and Sages and thus accumulate evil karma:

Using the Dharma like this is just carrying along a huge burden of sin.

We listen to many teachings but it only increases our pride

And our mental analysis does not penetrate the depths of their meaning.

Though we think we keep the Pratimoksha disciplines,

The "Four Dharmas of the Practitioner" are scattered without trace.

Though we think we possess the Bodhisattva's precious training,

The "Four Immeasurables" are like a painted picture of a lamp.

Though we think we keep the samaya–commitments of the Secret
Mantrayana

Taking the first Root Downfall for granted, we slip into underestimating it.

Though we can mouth explanation of the "Four Thoughts that Turn the
Mind",

The fact that we do not turn aside from our intentions shows our attachment
to appearances.

Though we rely on the Guru, our respect and devotion gradually wane —

In the place of pure vision we mistakenly think ourselves his equals.

Respect, love and kindness towards Vajra Brothers and Sisters decline —

A single bad word on their part seems intolerable and we shower them with
curses.

'The loving compassion that comes from recognising the beings of the six
realms as our parents

Vanishes like mist when not practiced from the depths of Bodhicitta.

Although acting as if we had experienced the development and completion
stages

We have not found any alternative to the endless flow of ordinary, confused
perception.

Though we know that Voidness is the ultimate teaching of both the Sutra
and Tantra

We have no decisive understanding of it and our mindstreams have become
as hard as horn.

Unable to rest in the self–arisen meditation on Reality As It Is,

We pay mere lip–service to the View, throwing cause and effect to the wind.

Although outwardly we appear disciplined and well–behaved,

Inwardly attachment, craving, desire and greed blaze like a fire.

Though we keep this body of ours secluded in mountain retreats,

Day and night, our minds are incessantly roaming the cities.

We don't really trust our own experience in practice

And yet, like children telling stories, we give guidance and advice to others.

Though the Compassion of the Three Jewels is unfailing and undeceiving,

Through failing devotion, we harm and cheat ourselves.

Thus, though we do not have wrong beliefs born from lack of trust and faith

Concerning the Holy Dharma and the Lama,

We sentient beings of this degenerate age perform wrong actions and always remain unfulfilled.

Knowing full well what we are doing, we give in to self–destructive carelessness.

Not protecting mindfulness, we suffer great loss.
Now it is time for mind to examine itself:

Everything we have done has only added to the confusion.

Everything we think is tainted by emotional affliction.

Since it is clear that all our virtuous actions are mixed with sin,

Where else is there to go, ultimately, but to the lower realms?

As to our actions and patterns of behaviour,

When we call them to mind we lose confidence in ourselves.

Examining others only increases alienation

And we find no one trustworthy to reassure and help us.

If we do not take ourselves in hand right now,

When we are caught by the messengers of the Lord of Death

There will be no one to protect us when hope is at an end.

Is not waiting with such empty hopes just deceiving ourselves?

With remorse and regret let us recognise our own faults —

Wherever we have failed in the Dharma because of error, lapse or
transgression

Let us not now increase it by concealing it.

In the presence of all those who have the Eye of Wisdom
We confess from the depths of our hearts.

Of your compassion, forgive us
And protect us from the terrifying abyss of the wrong path,

Reviving us so we attain to the perfect path of liberation.

Having busily spent this life doing this and that,

We have not laid hold of the essential meaning.

Now, giving up the path on which we know so much but miss the one,
essential point,

Should we not enter the path of knowing the one thing that will liberate all?

Supreme and undecieving protector, sole certainty and support,

Root Lama, embodiment of all Refuge,

We pray to you with one–pointed devotion:

Look upon us with compassion, Kindly Lord of Supreme Refuge!

Bless us that we see our own faults.

Bless us not to want to look for the faults in others.

Bless us that we pacify harmful, scheming and violent thought.

Bless us that good thoughts arise from deep within.

Bless us so that we have little desire and know how to be satisfied.

Bless us so that we remember that the time of death is uncertain.

Bless us so we have no plans left over when the moment of death arrives.

Bless us to generate great confidence in the Dharma.

Bless us that we practice impartial pure perception.

Bless us so that we develop uncontrived respect and devotion.

Bless us that we reduce dwelling on unattainable goals.

Bless us with the power to establish the Dharma in the depths of our hearts.

Please bless us with the ultimate point of the Dharma — the effort put into practice.

Bless us with the ultimate point of the practice — the liberation of our own mind-streams.

Bless us that our practice be free of obstacles.

Bless us that its fruits quickly ripen.

Bless us that we liberate all things with which we come into contact.

Bless us that we destroy the duality of hope and fear.

Bless us that we may see non-dual primordial wisdom.

Bless us that we recognise our own primordial wisdom.

Bless us that we reach firm ground.

Bless us so that we gain absolute and effortless certainty.

With the great vajra weapon of primordial wisdom, present since
beginningless time,

May the empty existence of samsara and nirvana be cut with a single stroke.

In the unobstructed bliss of the celebration of Nyema

May we ever enjoy an activity that transcends coming together and
separating.

In the expanse of all-pervasive equalness even the word "suffering" does not
exist.

Who, then, could there be still searching for happiness?

Where happiness and suffering have one taste and grasping is self-liberated,

This is the Kingdom of Samantabhadra. May we attain it in this very
lifetime!

Concerning this work, a combination of prayer, confession of wrong-doing
and aspiration, my wife, Sherabma Rig'dzin Wango, dreamed on the night of
the waxing of the moon of the tenth month of the Water Pig Year, that a girl
who had been in her dreams before appeared and said, "Please now ask
Rinpoche to write a prayer" and then departed.

Moreover, later, on the night of the tenth day of the same month, the girl
appeared again and said, "You must immediately help to request the writing
of a prayer," and then vanished.

I was told of the dreams the next morning, but said that not many could
recite the many prayers that already exist. However my wife then requested

me to quickly write a prayer without being too concerned about the length. Since there seemed to be a need for a prayer requesting protection from the sickness, famine, weapons and war so prevalent in these times, I conceived the idea of writing one but it remained only an intention as other things intervened and it no longer seemed so pressing.

Later on, however, during the night of the tenth day of the eleventh month, the girl again appeared in my wife's dreams and said, "My request for a prayer is not a thing of little importance. There is great need!". Hearing of this dream, on the morning of the fifteenth day of that month, I got an idea of what it was I would compose.

On the evening of the fourteenth day of the next month I prayed one-pointedly to Guru Rinpoche and made an aspiration for a very meaningful blessing.

At cock's-crow the following morning I had a dream in which I was sitting inside a large, temple-like building when suddenly a white man appeared. Young, dressed in white clothing and with long, flowing locks, he was softly playing the cymbals and dancing in the clockwise spiraling steps of the Ging as he came through the door and approached me, closer and closer, chanting the following words:

If you wish to establish the Dharma, plant it in the heart.
In the depths of the heart Buddhahood is found.

To enter the Buddha-land, purify ordinary and confused grasping.
Happily, the perfectly pure Buddha-land is not far away.
Generate diligence in practicing the essence of the Teachings.
Without practice, who can obtain results?

To perceive one's own worst faults oneself is most difficult.
Laying bare one's own faults is the essential point.

A Prayer by which to Recognize One's Own Faults, and Keep the Object
of Refuge in Mind

All defects slowly purify themselves
As good qualities gradually flourish.

At the end of each line he gradually increased the volume of the cymbals and at the end he departed playing very loudly which roused me. Immediately upon awakening I remembered his words and knew that their meaning had to do with the training in what to abandon and what to adopt. Thus, with regret at having seen my only father, Guru Padmasambhava, directly in front of me without having recognised him, with longing devotion, this old father of the Nyingma, Jigdräl Yeshe Dorje, wrote this down in accordance with his own experience. May it be beneficial!
SARWA DA MANGALAM — May all be perfectly auspicious!

Translation by Mike Dickman

A Short Song of the Six Similes to Satisfy the Heartfelt Yearning of Devoted Disciples, by Bokar Rinpoche

Fortunate men and women, who have karmic affinity with the Teachings,
You gained a free and fully endowed precious life,
Met an authentic noble spiritual master,
And received vast and deep teachings for spiritual maturity and liberation.
Now exert yourselves in cultivating meditative experience, I beseech you.

Your spiritual master is like the sun in space--
When your doubts or wrong views do not cloud him,
His compassionate light shines continuously:
In yearning faith and devotion, pray.

Your pure vision is like an eye--
When your pride or critical thoughts do not blind it,
All beings are mines of noble qualities:
Train in universal pure vision, I beseech you.

Your development of the mind of awakening is like a potent seed--
When plans for your own good do not spoil it,

It grows into perfect awakening:

Always meditate on the two aspects of the mind of awakening.

Your self-clinging is like an unseen enemy--

When you lose hold of the antidote of mindfulness,

You will never escape the den of suffering:

Therefore, please subdue your own mind.

Your mind's nature is like an endless ocean--

When waves of clinging to appearances do not disturb it,

It has a single flavor, the essence of reality:

Dwell without acceptance or rejection, affirmation or denial, I beseech you.

Your mind is like a wish-fulfilling jewel--

When delusion's impurities do not taint it,

It produces all you need and desire:

Always meditate on Great Seal.

At all times--in this life, the next, and in between--

The spiritual master's enlightened mind and your mind
Are not separate in your intrinsic awareness.
In natural repose, without distraction or clinging,
Make manifest the primordial body of ultimate enlightenment.

I, Karma Ngedon Chokyi Lodro, who holds the title of Bokar Tulku, composed this Short Song of the Six Similes to Satisfy the Heartfelt Yearning of Devoted Disciples according to the wishes of the residents of France's Niga Ling Retreat Center.

The Karma Kagyu Lineage Prayer

Great Vajradhara, Tilopa, Naropa

Marpa, Milarepa, and Lord of the Dharma, Gampopa

Knower of the three times, omniscient Karmapa

Lineage holders of the four great and eight lesser schools

Drikung, Taklung, Tsalpa, glorious Drukpa and others,

You who have thoroughly mastered the profound path of Mahamudra

Unrivaled protectors of beings, the Dakpo Kagyü

I pray to you, the Kagyü lamas

Grant your blessing that we may follow your tradition and example.

Detachment is the foot of meditation, it is taught.

Attachment to food and wealth disappears

To the meditator who gives up ties to this life,

Grant your blessing that attachment to ownership and honor cease.

Devotion is the head of meditation, it is taught.

The lama opens the door to the profound oral teachings

To the meditator who always turns to him,

Grant your blessing that uncontrived devotion be born within.

Unwavering attention is the body of meditation, it is taught.

Whatever arises, is the fresh nature of thought.

To the meditator who rests there in naturalness,

Grant your blessings that meditation is free from intellectualization.

The essence of thought is dharmakaya, it is taught.

They are nothing whatsoever, and yet they arise. mind,

Grant your blessing that the inseparability of samsara and nirvana be realized.

Through all my births, may I not be separated

From the perfect Lama and so enjoy the glory of the dharma.

May I completely accomplish the qualities of the path and stages

And quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.

Prayers for Accomplishment in Meditation

The Heart - Essence of the Great Masters, by H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche

Root guru, precious and most kind,
Lord of the mandala, sole unfailing lasting refuge,
with your compassion, take hold of me!
I work only for this life, not keeping death in mind,
wasting this free, well-favored human birth.

Human life lasting an instant, like a dream -
It might be happy, it might be sad.
Not wishing for joy, not avoiding sadness,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

This human life,
like a butter-lamp set out in the wind -
It might last a long time or it might not.
Not letting ego's hold tighten further,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

A life of luxury, like a bewitching apparition -
It might come to pass or it might not.
With the ways of the eight worldly dharmas
cast away like chaff,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

All these underlings like a bunch of birds in a tree -
They might surround me, they might not.
Not letting others lead me around by the nose,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

This illusory body,
like a rotting 100-year-old house -
It might last, it might fall into dust.
Not caught up in efforts
to get food, clothes, or medicines,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

This dharma behavior, like a child's game -
It might go on, it might stop.
Undeceived by things that don't really matter,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

All these gods and spirits, like a mirror's reflections -
They might give help, they might do harm.
Not seeing my own deluded visions to be enemies,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

All this confused chatter, traceless as an echo -
It might be interesting, it might not.
With the Three Jewels and my own mind
bearing witness,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Things that may prove useless in time of real need,
like a deer's antlers, -
I might know them, I might not.
Not placing my confidence
merely in the arts and sciences,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

These gifts and money given by the faithful,
like deadly poison -
I might receive them, I might not.
Not spending my life
trying to accumulate evil earnings,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

This lofty station, like dog-shit wrapped in satin -
I might have it, I might not.
Knowing my own rottenness at first hand,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!
Friends and family
like travelers who come together for a fair -
They might be vicious, they might be loving!
Cutting attachment's tough cord from the heart,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

All these possessions,
like the wealth found in a dream -
I might own them I might not.
Not using tact and flattery to turn others' heads,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

This rank in the hierarchy,
Like a tiny bird perched on a branch -
It might be high, it might be low.
Without making myself miserable
wishing for a better position,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Practicing the spells of black magic,
like deadly weapons -
I might be able to cast them I might not.
Not buying the knife that cuts my own throat,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Doing prayers,
like a parrot saying 'Om mani padme hum' -
I might do them, I might not.
Without boasting about whatever I do,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

The way one teaches the dharma,
like flowing water -
I might be expert I might not.

Without thinking that mere eloquence is dharma,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Intellect that makes quick discriminations,
like a rooting pig -
It might be sharp, it might be dull.
Not allowing the barbs of
pointless anger and attachment to arise,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Meditation experiences,
like well water in summer -
They may increase, they may lessen.
Without chasing after rainbows as children do,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

This pure perception,
like rain on a mountaintop -
It might arise, it might not.
Without taking deluded experience to be real,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

These freedoms and favorable conditions,
like a wish-fulfilling gem -
If they are lacking, there is no way
to accomplish the holy dharma.
Not throwing away what is already in my own hand,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

The glorious guru,
like a lamp that lights the way to liberation -
If I cannot meet him, there is no way

to realize the true nature.

Not jumping off a cliff when I know the path to go on,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

The holy dharma,
like a medicine to cure disease -

If I don't hear it, there is no way
to know what should be done and not done.
Not swallowing poison
when I can tell benefit from harm,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

The changing cycle of joy and sorrow,
like the changing seasons -
If this isn't seen, there is no way to achieve renunciation.
As a time of suffering will surely come around to me,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Samsara, like a stone fallen deep into water -
If I don't get out now, I won't get out later.
Pulling myself out by the rope of the
compassionate Three Jewels,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Liberation's good qualities,
like an island of jewels -
If they aren't known, there is no way
to begin to make efforts.
Having seen the advantage of permanent victory,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

The life stories of the great masters,
like the essence of amrita -
If they aren't known, there is no way

for confidence to arise.

Not choosing self-destruction
when I can tell victory from defeat,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Bodhicitta, like a fertile field -
Unless it is cultivated, there is no way
to achieve enlightenment.

Not staying idle
when there is a great aim to be accomplished,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

My own mind, like a monkey's nonsense -
Without keeping guard, there is no way
to avoid conflicting emotions.
Not acting without restraint, like a lunatic,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Ego, like a shadow one is born with -
Until it's abandoned, there is no way
to reach a place of real joy.
When the enemy is in my clutches,
why treat him as friend?
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

The five poisons, like hot embers among ashes -
Until they're destroyed,
one can't remain at rest in the natural state.
Not raising baby vipers in my pockets,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

This mind-stream,
like the tough hide of a butter-bag -
If it's not tamed and softened,

one can't mix mind with dharma.

Without spoiling the child that is born of itself,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

These ingrained bad habits, karmic patterns,
like the strong currents of a river -
If they aren't cut,
one can't avoid acting contrary to the dharma.
Without selling weapons to my enemies,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

These distractions, like never-ending waves -
If they aren't given up, there is no way
to become stable.
When I can do as I like, why practice samsára?
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

The lama's blessings,
like spring warming up soil and water -
If they don't enter into me, there is no way
to be introduced to the nature of mind.
When there is a short cut,
why take the long way around?
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

This retreat in the wilderness,
like summer in a lush place where herbs grow -
If I don't remain here, there is no way
for good qualities to be born.
When high up in the mountains,
don't wander back into black towns.
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Desire for pleasure,
like a bad-luck spirit entering the house -

If I'm not free of it,
I'll never stop working toward suffering.
Not making offerings to voracious ghosts
as my personal gods,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Mindfulness, like the lock on a castle gate -
If it is lacking, one can't
stop the movements of illusion.
When the thief is surely coming,
why forget to bar the door?
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

The true nature, unchanging, like the sky -
Until it's realized, one can't
completely resolve doubts as to the view.
Not letting myself be chained by theories,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

Awareness, like a flawless piece of crystal -
Until it's seen,
intentional meditation cannot dissolve.
When there's an inseparable companion,
why go off looking for another?
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

The face of ordinary mind, like an old friend -
If it's not seen, all that one does is misleading.
Without groping in the darkness
of my own closed eyes,
May I truly practice the sublime teachings!

In short, without giving up
this life's preoccupations, there's no way
to accomplish the sacred teachings after death.
Having decided to show myself great kindness,
May all that I do be toward the dharma.

May I not have wrong views toward the guru
who has given instruction in accord with the dharma!

May I not lose faith in the yidam when misfortunes occur!

May I not put off practice when circumstances are hard!

May there be no obstacles to attaining siddhi!

All these activities are pointless,
like making a grand tour of a wasteland.

All this trying just makes my mind-stream more rigid.

All this thinking only adds confusion onto confusion.

All that passes for dharma to ordinary people
only makes for further binding.

So much activity - nothing comes of it.
So much thinking - no point to it,
So much wanting - no time for it.
Having given this up,
May I be able to practice according to instructions.

If I must do something,
may Buddha's teaching bear it witness!
If I must do something, mix mind-stream and dharma.
If I must accomplish something,
read the life stories of past masters.

What's the use of other things? Spoiled brat!
Take a low seat and become rich with contentment.
Try hard to get free of the eight worldly concerns.

May the guru's blessings enter into me,
May my realization become equal to the sky.
Grant your blessings so that I may reach Kuntuzangpo's throne.

Written by Jigdral Yeshe Dorje for his own prayers,
condensing the essential meaning from the vajra words of advice from
previous great masters.

This was offered with prayers for the continued blessing of H.H. Dudjom
Rinpoche, Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, and for the long life of his emanation, for the
sake of all beings.

Translated by Bhakha Tulku Rinpoche and Constance Wilkinson.

The Aspiration Prayer for the Attainment of Mahamudra, by The Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje

Gurus and yidams, deities of the mandala,
 Buddhas of the three times in the ten directions and your sons and daughters,
 Please consider us with kindness and understanding, and
 Grant your blessing that these aspirations may be accomplished exactly as
 we ask.

Sprung from the snow mountain of pure intentions and actions
 Of myself and all sentient beings without limit,
 May the river of accumulated virtue of the threefold purity
 Flow into the ocean of the four bodies of the Victorious Ones.

So long as this is not accomplished,
 Through all my lifetimes, birth upon birth,
 May not even the words "evil deeds" and "suffering" be heard
 And may we enjoy the splendour
 and goodness of oceans of happiness and virtue.

Having obtained the supreme freedoms
 and conjunctions of the precious human existence,
 endowed with faith, energy, and intelligence,
 Having attended on a worthy spiritual friend
 and received the pith of the holy instructions,
 May we practice these properly, just as we have received them,
 without obstacle or interruption.
 In all our lives, may we practice and enjoy the holy dharma.

Hearing and studying the scriptures and
 reasonings free us from the obscuration of not knowing,
 Contemplating the oral instructions disperses the darkness of doubt.
 In the light born of meditation what is shines forth just as it is.
 May the brightness of the three prajnas grow in power.

By understanding the meaning of the ground,
which is the two truths free from the extremes of eternalism and nihilism
And by practising the supreme path of the two accumulations,
free from the extremes of exaggeration and denial,
Is attained the fruit of well-being for oneself and others,
free from the extremes of samsara and nirvana.
May all beings meet the dharma which neither errs nor misleads.

The ground of purification is the mind itself,
indivisible cognitive clarity and emptiness.
That which purifies is the great vajra yoga of mahamudra.
What is to be purified are the adventitious,
temporary contaminations of confusion,
May the fruit of purification, the stainless dharmakaya, be manifest.

Resolving doubts about the ground brings conviction in the view.
Then keeping one's awareness unwavering in accordance with the view,
is the subtle pith of meditation.
Putting all aspects of meditation into practice is the supreme action.
The view, the meditation, the action--may there be confidence in these.

All phenomena are illusory displays of mind.
Mind is no mind--the mind's nature is empty of any entity that is mind
Being empty, it is unceasing and unimpeded,
manifesting as everything whatsoever.
Examining well, may all doubts about the ground be discerned and cut.

Naturally manifesting appearances, that never truly exist, are confused into
objects. Spontaneous
intelligence, under the power of ignorance, is confused into a self.
By the power of this dualistic fixation, beings wander in the realms of
samsaric existence.
May ignorance, the root of confusion, be discovered and cut.

It is not existent--even the Victorious Ones do not see it.
It is not nonexistent--it is the basis of all samsara and nirvana.

This is not a contradiction, but the middle path of unity.
May the ultimate nature of phenomena, limitless mind beyond extremes, be realised.

If one says, "This is it," there is nothing to show.
If one says, "This is not it," there is nothing to deny.
The true nature of phenomena,
which transcends conceptual understanding, is unconditioned.
May conviction be gained in the ultimate, perfect truth.

Not realising it, one circles in the ocean of samsara.
If it is realised, buddha is not anything other.
It is completely devoid of any "This is it," or "This is not it."
May this simple secret, this ultimate essence of phenomena,
which is the basis of everything, be realised.

Appearance is mind and emptiness is mind.
Realisation is mind and confusion is mind.
Arising is mind and cessation is mind.
May all doubts about mind be resolved.

Not adulterating meditation with conceptual striving or mentally created meditation,
Unmoved by the winds of everyday busyness,
Knowing how to rest in the uncontrived, natural spontaneous flow,
May the practice of resting in mind's true nature be skilfully sustained.

The waves of subtle and coarse thoughts calm down by themselves in their own place,
And the unmoving waters of mind rest naturally.
Free from dullness, torpor, and, murkiness,
May the ocean of shamatha be unmoving and stable.

Looking again and again at the mind which cannot be looked at,
The meaning which cannot be seen is vividly seen, just as it is.
Thus cutting doubts about how it is or is not,
May the unconfused genuine self-nature be known by self-nature itself.

Looking at objects, the mind devoid of objects is seen;
Looking at mind, its empty nature devoid of mind is seen;
Looking at both of these, dualistic clinging is self-liberated.
May the nature of mind, the clear light nature of what is, be realised.

Free from mental fabrication, it is the great seal, mahamudra.
Free from extremes, it is the great middle way, madhyamika.
The consummation of everything, it is also called the great perfection,
dzogchen.
May there be confidence that by understanding one,
the essential meaning of all is realised.

Great bliss free from attachment is unceasing.
Luminosity free from fixation on characteristics is unobscured.
Nonthought transcending conceptual mind is spontaneous presence.
May the effortless enjoyment of these experiences be continuous.

Longing for good and clinging to experiences are self-liberated.
Negative thoughts and confusion purify naturally in ultimate space.
In ordinary mind there is no rejecting and accepting, loss and gain.
May simplicity, the truth of the ultimate essence of everything, be realised.

The true nature of beings is always buddha.
Not realising that, they wander in endless samsara.
For the boundless suffering of sentient beings
May unbearable compassion be conceived in our being.

When the energy of unbearable compassion is unceasing,
In expressions of loving kindness,
the truth of its essential emptiness is nakedly clear.
This unity is the supreme unerring path.
Inseparable from it, may we meditate day and night.

By the power of meditation arise the eyes and supernormal perceptions,
Sentient beings are ripened and buddha fields are perfectly purified,
The aspirations that accomplish the qualities of a buddha are fulfilled.

By bringing these three to utmost fruition-fulfilling,
ripening and purifying-may utmost buddhahood be manifest.

By the power of the compassion of the Victorious Ones of the ten directions
and their sons and daughters,
And by the power of all the pure virtue that exists,
May the pure aspirations of myself and all sentient beings
Be accomplished exactly as we wish.

Prayers to different Deities, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

Chenrezig, by Bokar Rinpoche

Who *really* is Chenrezig, deity with a white body and four, sometimes one thousand arms? Who is this deity for whom the Tibetans nourish a special devotion and whose meditation is now also practiced by many Westerners?....

First, we need to understand that Chenrezig is both an appearance, the divine manifestation as well as an essence, the inner reality, with one not excluding or contradicting the other. The appearance of Chenrezig is the symbol of his essence made manifest. Through this appearance we can approach the essence of Chenrezig. The appearance does not exhaust the essence anymore than the essence negates the appearance. To pretend that Chenrezig only has an existence outside ourselves would be a mistake. But it would also be a mistake to see him only as an abstraction. Grasping the link between the two aspects of the deity (appearance and essence) is necessary in order to understand both his nature and meditation....

Chenrezig is the mode of being of the mind that is the union of emptiness and compassion....He is the awakened nature of each being's own mind, the love and compassion primordially present in the *dharmakaya* [pure transcending awareness].

Chenrezig is within us because love and compassion are not qualities added to the mind. These qualities are part of the awakened state even if, for the moment, this state exists only as a potential for us....

Saying that Chenrezig is the ultimate nature of the mind does not negate his form manifestation. The essence expresses itself through an appearance. Chenrezig exists on the level of definitive meaning and also on the level of

literal meaning where he appears in the form of the deity by which he is known.

He is the visible expression taken by all the buddhas to help us activate the love and compassion that are presently only a potential in us and to reveal the ultimate Chenrezig to ourselves....

When we do the meditation of Chenrezig, if we see love and compassion grow in our mind, it is a sign that our practice is fruitful....

Every person whose heart is moved by love and compassion, who deeply and sincerely acts for the benefit of others without concern for fame, profit, social position, or recognition expresses the activity of Chenrezig. Love and compassion are the true signs revealing the presence of Chenrezig....

The mind of Chenrezig can work in the form of a human, an animal, a plant, or an inert thing. His mind is always the expression of compassion.

This explanation is excerpted with the kind permission of Clear Point Press, from the book entitled:

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The Four Line Prayer to Tara

Om, homage to the Transcendent Accomplished Conqueror,
the Goddess Tara.

Homage to Tara who is the Heroine, the Liberator tare
She who calms all fears with tuttare
She who bestows all success with ture
To soha and the other syllables
I offer the greatest homage

Prayer to Tara

In Praise of Tara

Your beauty tames the minds of living beings.
You draw all beings to yourself.
Your virtue calms their fears and brings happiness.

You are the one who makes the impossible possible.
You conquer disbelief.
You are miraculous activity, beyond comprehension.

You are ‘swift to regard’, quick to respond,
the remover of obstacles, grace and blessings,
the relative and ultimate liberator of beings

Your beauty inspires uprightness of moral character
You pacify habit energy
We ‘shed our skins’, lose our old ways,
‘like leaves falling off of trees’
You give new strength
You purify the mind - like the ‘stream-clearing jewel’
You uplift and brighten the mind

You set all things right
You bring about reconciliation without impediment
without anything blocking it
You bring harmony to every surrounding circumstance

You bring out the best that is in us all

You make all practices effective

You are the feeling of ‘yes’, the sum of all optimism,
joyful positive energy,
the feeling of ‘I can’

You are light
You are grace in my life

You are playful, youthful, joyful, quick, charming, elegant, inspiring, wise,
warm, strengthening, encouraging, healing;
How can I call you? Tara - hope, positive energy, joyful, pure, wholesome
energy

With your rivers
irrigate my limbs, these fields
With your warmth, your light
bring about the total flowering of goodness...

Because this is Divine Feminine energy, quick to respond,
with magical activity,
the equivalent of the patron saint of lost causes,
grace,
spiritual beauty bringing light, giving hope,
removing obstacles,
calming fear, pacifying suffering
bringing harmony to every surrounding circumstance,
bringing life, and happiness,
and being the sum of all optimism, inspiring, positive energy,
enabling all the good things we would do to become effective,
to become fulfilled,
to become complete,
This is called Green Tara

May all share in these blessings...

The Twenty-One Verses in Praise of Tara

OM; I prostrate to the noble transcendent liberator.

1

Homage to Tara swift and fearless
With eyes like a flash of lightning
Lotus-born in an ocean of tears
Of Chenresig, three worlds' protector.

2

Homage to you whose face is like
One hundred autumn moons gathered
And blazes with the dazzling light
Of a thousand constellations.

3

Homage to you born from a gold-blue lotus
Hands adorned with lotus flowers
Essence of giving, effort and ethics,
Patience, concentration and wisdom.

4

Homage to you who crown all Buddhas
Whose action subdues without limit
Attained to every perfection
On you the bodhisattvas rely.

5

Homage to you whose TUTTARE and HUM
Fill the realms of desire, form and space.
You crush seven worlds beneath your feet
And have power to call all forces.

6

Homage to you adored by Indra,
Agni, Brahma, Vayu and Ishvara.
Praised in song by hosts of spirits,
Zombies, scent-eaters and yakshas.

7

Homage to you whose TREY and PEY
Destroy external wheels of magic.
Right leg drawn in and left extended,
You blaze within a raging fire.

8

Homage to you whose TURE destroys
The great fears, the mighty demons.
With a wrathful frown on your lotus face,
You slay all foes without exception.

9

Homage to you beautifully adorned
By the Three Jewels' gesture at your heart.
Your wheel shines in all directions
With a whirling mass of light.

10

Homage to you, radiant and joyful
Whose crown emits a garland of light.
You, by the laughter of TUTTARE
Conquer demons and lords of the world.

11

Homage to you with power to invoke
The assembly of local protectors.
With your fierce frown and vibrating HUM,
You bring freedom from all poverty.

12

Homage to you with crescent moon crown
All your adornments dazzling bright.
From your hair-knot, Amitabha
Shines eternal with great beams of light.

13

Homage to you who dwells in a blazing wreath
Like the fire at the end of this age.
Your right leg outstretched and left drawn in,
Joy surrounds you who defeats hosts of foes.

14

Homage to you whose foot stamps the earth
And whose palm strikes the ground by your side.
With a wrathful glance and the letter HUM,
You subdue all in the seven stages.

15

Homage to the blissful, virtuous, peaceful one
Object of practice, nirvana's peace
Perfectly endowed with SOHA and OM
Overcoming all the great evils.

16

Homage to you with joyous retinue
You subdue fully all enemies' forms
The ten-letter mantra adorns your heart
And your knowledge-HUM brings liberation.

17

Homage to TURE with stamping feet
Whose essence is the seed-letter HUM
You cause Merus, Mandara and Vindaya
And all three worlds to tremble and shake.

18

Homage to you who holds in your hand
A moon like a celestial lake
Saying TARA twice and the letter PEY
You dispel all poisons without exception.

19

Homage to you on whom the kings of gods,
The gods themselves and all spirits rely.
Your armor radiates joy to all
You soothe conflicts and nightmares as well.

20

Homage to you whose eyes, the sun and moon,
Radiate with pure brilliant light
Uttering HARA twice and TUTTARE
Dispels extremely fearful plagues.

21

Homage to you, adorned with three natures
Perfectly endowed with peaceful strength
You destroy demons, zombies and yakshas
O TURE, most exalted and sublime!
Thus the root mantra is praised
And twenty-one homages offered.

The Condensed Praise

OM to the transcendent subduer, Arya Tara, I prostrate.
Homage to the glorious one who frees with TARE;
With TUTTARE you calm all fears;
You bestow all success with TURE;
To the sound SOHA I pay great homage.

The Benefits of Reciting the Homage

Those endowed with perfect and pure respect for these goddesses
The intelligent who recite these praises with most supreme faith
Both in the evening and upon waking at dawn
Will have fearlessness bestowed on them by this remembrance.
After being purified of all evils completely,
They will attain the destruction of all lower realms
And the seven million conquering Buddhas
Will quickly grant them every empowerment.
Thus they will attain greatness and so forth
To the ultimate state of supreme Buddhahood.
As a result all violent poisons -
Whether abiding within or spreading to others -
That they have eaten or drunk
By this remembrance will be completely removed
And they will eliminate completely afflictions by spirits, epidemics,
Poisons and all various sufferings.
If for oneself or for the sake of others,
These praises are read sincerely two, three or seven times,
Those wishing a child will have one
And those wishing wealth will attain this as well.
Without obstruction all of their wishes will be granted
And every single hindrance will be destroyed as it arises.

A Requesting Prayer to Tara

O compassionate and venerable subduing goddess
May the infinite beings, including myself,
Soon purify the two obscurations and complete both collections
So that we may attain full enlightenment.
For all of my lives, until I reach this stage
May I know the sublime happiness of humans and gods.
So that I may become fully omniscient
Please pacify quickly all obstacles, spirits,
Obstructions, epidemics, diseases and so forth
The various causes of untimely death,
Bad dreams and omens, the eight fears and other afflictions,
And make it so that they no longer exist.
May the mundane and supramundane collections
Of all excellent auspicious qualities and happiness
Increase and develop and may all wishes
Be fulfilled naturally and effortlessly, without an exception.
May I strive to realize and increase the sacred Dharma
Accomplishing your stage and beholding your sublime face,
May my understanding of emptiness and the precious dedicated heart
Increase like the moon waxing full.
May I be reborn from an extremely beautiful and holy lotus
In the joyous and noble mandala of the conqueror
May I attain whatever prophecy I receive
In the presence of Amitabha, Buddha of Infinite Light.
O deity, whom I have accomplished from previous lives
The enlightening influence of the three-time Buddhas
Blue-green, one face and two arms, the swift pacifier
O mother holding an utpala flower, may you be auspicious!
Whatever your body, O Mother of Conquerors,
Whatever your retinue, lifespan and pure land,
Whatever your name, most noble and holy,
May I and all others attain only these.

By the force of these praises and requests made to you,
May all disease, poverty, fighting and quarrels be calmed,
May the precious Dharma and everything auspicious increase
Throughout the world and directions where I and all others dwell.

A Song of Longing for Tara, the Infallible, by Lobsang Tenpey Gyaltsen

From my heart I bow to Divine Mother Tara,
essence of love and compassion,
the most precious objects of refuge gathered in to one.
From now until I reach enlightenment,
hook me with your great love and kindness to liberate me.

By the witness of the Three Jewels,
not just from my mouth but from my innermost heart and bones,
I pray to you morning and evening.
Show your blissful face to me, Loving One.
Grant me the nectar of your speech.

Great gurus and small gurus cheat us with their made-up teachings,
selling Dharma, teaching without comprehension,
not observing who is qualified and who is not,
being concerned with their own happiness
and the eight worldly concerns.
Since I can no longer trust friends of this degenerate age,
you are my principle guru.
Inspire me, Divine Mother, essence of love.
Arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

I take refuge in you, Tara;
like you, no Buddha could ever deceive me.
But understanding the odd character of these times,
most Buddhas have gone into the bliss of nirvana.
Even though they have great compassion,
we have no connection.
Since for me there are no other deities,
you are my principle deity.
Bestow realizations upon me,

Divine Mother, essence of love.
Arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

Most Dharma protectors do now show their powers.
Tired of those who invoke them, they do not act.
Other protectors, lacking insight but proud of their power,
may be friendly for a while but will later do me harm.
Since I cannot rely on other protectors,
you are my principle protector.
With divine action, Wisdom Mother, essence of love,
arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

To ordinary view the names of objects are the same as their meaning.
Like this, they produce afflictions and bind us to samsara.
When it is time to die, unless I understand the true nature,
could a wish-fulfilling gem enable me to carry even a sesame seed with me?
Since I do not trust in illusions, you are my real richness.
Please grant my desires, Divine Mother, essence of love.
Arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

I cannot rely on non-virtuous friends for even a day.
They pretend to be close to me and all the while
have in mind the opposite.
They are friends when they wish it and enemies when they don't.
Since I cannot trust in this kind of friend, you are my best friend.
Be close to me, Divine Mother, essence of love.
Arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

You are my guru, my yidam, my protector, my refuge,
my food, my clothes, my possessions, and my friend.
Since your divine quality is everything to me,
let me spontaneously achieve all that I wish.

Although I am overwhelmed by my habitual, uncontrolled mind,
please cut these self-centered thoughts so I will be able to give my body and
my life millions of times without difficulty
to each sentient being.

Inspire me to be able to develop this kind of compassion
to benefit all.

Empower me to cut the root of samsara,
self-grasping,
and to understand the pure doctrine,
the most difficult middle way,
free from the errors of extremes.

Inspire me to practice as a bodhisattva,
turning away from what is worldly,
dedicating all my virtues to teaching living beings,
never for even one instant thinking of just my own happiness.
Let me wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all.

Empower me to actualize as much as possible
the most subtle vows
and to keep them without a careless mind,
thus becoming the most perfect bodhisattva.

Outwardly, let me be simple in my practice,
while inwardly, actualize the depth of the diamond vehicle
with the strong wish to practice the two stages.
Inspire me to attain enlightenment quickly
for the benefit of all.

Divine Wisdom Mother Tara, you know everything about my life-
my ups and downs, my good and bad.
Think lovingly of me, my only mother.

I give myself and all who trust in me to you,
Divine Wisdom Mother Tara.
Being completely open to you,
let us be born in the highest pure land.
Set me there quickly with no births in between.

May the hook of your compassion and your skillful means
transform my mind in to Dharma
and transform the minds of all beings,
whoever they are.
They have all been my mother,
the mother of one unable to follow the Conqueror's teachings.

By reciting this prayer three times a day
and by remembering the Divine Wisdom Mother Tara,
may I and all beings who are connected to me
reach whatever pure land we wish.

May the Three Jewels and especially the Divine Wisdom Mother,
whose essence is compassion,
hold me dear until I reach enlightenment.
May I quickly conquer the four negative forces.

If, as long as you live, you recite this prayer three times every day,
not just from the mouth (in words only)
but strongly linked with your mind,
you will have a close connection and will see Tara's face.
No hindrances will be experienced and all wishes will be fulfilled.
You will have a close relationship with all Buddhas and bodhisattvas,
and they will hold you dear.
If you recite the 'Homage to the Twenty-one Taras'
and this prayer,
you will attain the Divine Liberating Mother.

Colophon: This prayer to Venerable Tara, in heart words making his own requests and also non-deceptive to others, was composed by the Buddhist Monk Lobsang Tenpey Gyaltzen, in his nineteenth year, the Water Mouse year (1852), on the third day of the miracle month (second month of the lunar calendar) at Bengar Namgyal Ling. It is sure to have great benefit.

A deity for all reasons

Because this is universal love and compassion, accepting all, generous, warmly encouraging, like the sun in the sky, extending in all directions, pure, transcendent, and capable of manifesting in a multitude of ways to benefit living beings, it is called
Thousand-Armed Avalokiteshvara;

May all share in these blessings... OM MANI PEME HUM

Because this is Divine Feminine energy, quick to respond, with magical activity, the equivalent of the patron saint of lost causes, spiritual beauty bringing light, giving hope, removing obstacles, calming fear, pacifying suffering bringing harmony to every surrounding circumstance, bringing life, and happiness, and being the sum of all optimism, inspiring, positive energy, enabling all the good things we would do to become effective, to become fulfilled, to become complete, this is called Green Tara;

May all share in these blessings... OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA

Because this is clear wisdom, causing Dharma to arise in the minds of sentient beings, illuminating, cutting the bonds of suffering, and is the lord of all doctors, the lord of speech, of writers and teachers, it is called Manjushri;

May all share in this benefit, and enjoy brilliant freedom and peace... OM
AH RA PA TZA NA DHI

Because this is fierce, utterly victorious, powerful, undaunted, unrelenting, of great strength, empowering all virtuous activity, and like a thunder-clap, brilliant, awakening, healing, cutting away all that is superfluous- burdens gone; and because this is protective, bringing a feeling of peace and safety, this is called by the name of Vajrapani; and all other protectors; the essence of all protectors;

May all beings have happiness... may all beings enjoy these blessings...
HUNG BENZRA PE

Because it is illuminating, warm, transcendent pure love, light, and freedom, this is Amitabha;

May all beings enjoy this pure land... NAMO AMITABHA BUDDHA

Because this is love, it is Maitreya;

May all share in these blessings... OM BUDDHA MAITREYA MEM
SOHA

Because this is birthless and deathless, and giving long life, it is Amitayus;

May all share in these blessings... OM AMITAYUS SOHA

Because this is healing, freedom from knots in the mind, and freedom from depression, being health in mind, body, and spirit, radiant, life-giving, it is called Medicine Buddha, Healing Buddha, or Health Buddha;

May all beings be healthy and strong...

May all enjoy this happiness... TAYATHA OM BEKANDZE BEKANDZE
MAHA BEKANDZE RADZO SAMUNGATE SOHA

Because it is utterly pure, giving purity, bringing about the total purification of karma, clearing away the residue of wrong thinking and wrong action, this is called Vajrasattva;

May all beings share this merit... OM BENZRA SATO HUM

Because this is utterly peaceful and pure, soothing, pacifying, healthy and healing, and nourishing, giving in abundance, with much love and joy, with the pure elements in balance, giving that, it is called White Tara;

May all beings have the blessings of a strong constitution, excellent resistance, and, if necessary, great powers of recuperation... OM TARA
TUTTARE TURE SOHA

Because this bodhicitta is true wealth, to be given and enjoyed,
it is called Golden-Yellow Tara, Vasudara; OM VASUDARA SOHA

Because it is all this, it is called by the name of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, our root guru, and all other gurus and bodhisattvas; Vajradhara, the Adi- or Primordial Buddha, our original nature, the nature of mind, transcending concepts; it is called peace, fulfillment, the great perfection; it is called our true nature, the basis of all.

This is our aim to be realized. This is what is to be actualized, awakened, brought forth. This is what is to be accomplished.

May whatever qualities are necessary for the benefit of living beings awaken in me, and in all others.

Every deity contains all deities. And while this is true, it is also true that the practice of any one aspect awakens that quality, until they are all together, present, and activated as necessary.

Different practices can add something to all that we do as well. They can be mutually clarifying, strengthening, and enriching.

Any one practice includes all practices. For different kinds of people, however, or even for any one person at different times in their life different practices will make the fullness of what this means become more swiftly and easily known, and experienced.

May all beings benefit.

Request to the Supreme Compassionate One

Praise to the beautiful four-armed lord of the world,
Sublime embodiment emanating from the unity of all the victorious ones of
the three times;
Possessor of all knowledge and holder of the lotus,
Your immaculate feet beautifully ornament my crown.

May the karmic pollution of myself and others be washed away
by the cool tear of your compassion, great loving protector,
Sole refuge of pitiful, transmigrating beings who have no guide.
You generated bodhicitta first and then reached the extreme limit.

O merciful one, please behold with your compassionate eye
The beings of the evil-gone, caught in realms difficult to escape,
Experiencing the individual results of evil actions,
As hell beings or pretas, amongst animals, asuras, and so on.

Behold with compassion the thoughtless ones who return empty handed;
even their high rebirth was without meaning.
Their human bodies were so rare and fragile, but their lives were consumed
only in suffering.
Amidst their endless actions the lord of death arrived.

Behold with compassion tough-skinned beings like me
Who maintain a religious manner but do not achieve the great meaning,
Being overwhelmed by attachment, hatred, and the eight worldly concerns,
Without having subdued our minds by observing cause and result.

With compassion, please lead those without refuge on the path.
For when their vision of this life fades,
The vision of their self-created karma arises as the enemy in the bardo,
And they are taken on a precipitous route by Yama's messenger.

Look upon us with compassion, O Lama Chenrezig,
Mother attached by compassion to all sentient beings,
Who is the special sole refuge of the Snow Land.
May I and all others quickly attain your state of enlightenment.

Author's colophon:

I, Pu.lha, who bears the name 'incarnate lama' made retreat of the supreme Compassionate One when I was fifteen years old. Because many bad appearances arose as objects of mind, with devotion I wrote this request. By this, may the prayers of all parent sentient beings be instantly fulfilled.

colophon:

This text was composed by the root guru of Trulshik Rinpoche when he was in his late teens. It was translated at Lawudo, Solo Khumbu, in 1997 during the Nyung Ne by Lama Zopa Rinpoche together with Ven. Losang Gyaltzen.

Prayers from the Chenrezig Sadhana

Refuge Prayer

From this moment until the Heart of Enlightenment is reached, I and all sentient beings as limitless as the sky * go for refuge to all the glorious Holy Lamas; we go for refuge to all the Yidams, the Dieties gathered in the Mandalas; we go for refuge to all the Buddhas, those that have conquered and gone beyond; we go for refuge to all the Supreme Dharma; we go for refuge to all the Noble Sangha; we go for refuge to all the Dakas, Dakinis, Protectors and Defenders of Dharma who possess the eye of Transcending Awareness.

Prayer of Refuge and to generate bodhicitta

To the Buddhas, Dharma, and Supreme Assembly I go for refuge until Enlightenment. May I, through merit gained by gifts and so on, accomplish Buddhahood for the sake of all beings.

Homage

Lord, whose white body is not clothed by fault, whose head is adorned by a Perfect Buddha, who looks upon all beings with Eyes of Compassion, to you Chenrezig I pay homage.

The Seven-Branch Prayer

To the Sublime One, the Mighty Chenrezig, to the Buddhas and their Sons, who reside in the ten directions and the three times, with complete sincerity I pay homage.

I offer flowers, incense, butter-lamps, perfume, food, music, and other real and imaginary offerings and so on, and beseech the Noble Assembly to accept them.

I confess all the unskillful actions caused by the power of conflicting emotions, the ten unvirtuous deeds and the five sins of limitless consequence done from beginningless time until now.

I rejoice in the spiritual merit of whatever virtue Sravakas, Pratyeka Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and ordinary beings gather throughout the three times.

I pray that the Dharma Wheel of the Mahayana, Hinayana, and of the Teachings common to both be turned in accordance with the wishes and aptitudes of beings.

I beseech the Buddhas not to pass into Nirvana as long as samsara is not emptied, but to look with compassion upon sentient beings who wallow in the ocean of suffering.

May whatever merit I have accumulated be the cause for the Enlightenment of Beings; may I quickly become a splendid leader of beings.

Prayer to Chenrezig I

I pray to you Lama Chenrezig. I pray to you Yidam Chenrezig. I pray to you Perfect Noble Chenrezig. I pray to you Lord Protector Chenrezig. I pray to you Lord of Love Chenrezig. Great Compassionate Victor, please hold us with your compassion, numberless beings who wander in endless samsara experiencing unbearable suffering. There is no other refuge than you, Protector! Please bestow the blessing to obtain omniscient Buddhahood.

The Six-Realm Prayer, by Tang tong Gyalpo

By the power of accumulating negative Karma from beginningless time, sentient beings, through the force of anger, are born as hell beings and experience the suffering of heat and cold. May they all be born in your presence, Perfect Diety. OM MANI PADME HUNG

By the power of accumulating negative Karma from beginningless time, sentient beings, through the force of greed, are born in the realm of pretas and experience the suffering of hunger and thirst. May they all be born in your perfect realm, the Potala. OM MANI PADME HUNG

By the power of accumulating negative Karma from beginningless time, sentient beings, through the force of stupidity, are born as animals and experience the suffering of dullness and stupidity. May they all be born in your presence, Protector. OM MANI PADME HUNG

By the power of accumulating negative Karma from beginningless time, sentient beings, through the force of desire, are born in the human realm and experience the suffering of excessive activity and constant frustration. May they all be born in the Pure Land of Dewachen. OM MANI PADME HUNG

(This prayer, the vajra words of prayer to the Sublime Chenrezig, was composed by the Mahasiddha, Tang tong Gyalpo, who remembered them from a previous incarnation when he had been the monk Pema Karpo, who addressed this prayer one-pointedly to the Sublime Chenrezig while doing the Nyung Ne practice from his twentieth to his eightieth year.)

By the power of accumulating negative Karma from beginningless time, sentient beings, through the force of jealousy, are born in the realm of the demi-gods and experience the suffering of fighting and quarreling. May they all be born in your realm, the Potala. OM MANI PADME HUNG

By the power of accumulating negative Karma from beginningless time, sentient beings, through the force of pride, are born in the realm of the gods and experience the suffering of change and falling. May they all be born in your realm, the Potala. OM MANI PADME HUNG

Prayer to Chenrezig II

Wherever I am born may my deeds, by equalling Chenrezig's, liberate beings from impure realms and spread the perfect sound of the six syllables in the ten directions. Through the power of praying to you Perfect Noble One, may beings who I am to discipline pay the greatest attention to action and result, and diligently practice virtue and the Dharma for the benefit of beings.

Dedication Prayer

Through this virtue, may I quickly achieve the realization of Mighty Chenrezig and may I bring every single being to that same state.

Through the merit of reciting and meditating may I and every being to whom I am connected, when these imperfect forms are left behind, be miraculously born in Dewachen. May I then immediately cross the ten levels and send out emanations for the benefit of others.

Through this virtue, may all beings perfect the accumulation of spiritual merit and awareness. May they attain the Two Supreme Bodies which arise from merit and awareness.

Bodhicitta is precious; may it arise in those who have not cultivated it. In those who have cultivated it, may it not diminish; may it ever grow and flourish.

Request Prayer from A Meditation on 1000-Armed Chenrezig

O Arya Compassionate-eyed One
Who is the treasure of compassion,
I request you, please listen to me,
Please guide myself, mothers and fathers,
In all six realms to be freed quickly
From the great ocean of samsara.
I request that the vast and profound
Peerless awakening mind may grow.
With the tear of your great compassion,
Please cleanse all karmas and delusion.
Please lead with your hand of compassion
Me and migrants to fields of bliss.
Please Amitabha and Chenresig,
In all my lives be virtuous friends.
Show well the undeceptive pure path
And quickly place us in Buddha's state.

Prayer to Chenrayzig, the Buddha of Compassion, by King Songtsen Gampo

English translation and Commentary by Lama Thubten Choedak

Namo Lokishvaraya

O Mighty Ruler of the World, watch upon us with your Compassion
Reverend Lord, Treasure of Compassion, be our protector and refuge.
Most Exalted Chenrayzig, I pray to you.

Chenrayzig, guide and liberate us from the great and boundless ocean of
Samsara.

When we clouded by the darkness of ignorance and misunderstanding,
Chenrayzig, be torch to dispel it.

When we are inflamed with hatred like fire against enemies,
Chenrayzig, be a stream of water to pacify it.

When we caught up in attachment to our relatives as if in a whirlpool,
Chenrayzig, enable us to realize the nature of existence.

When we are tied by the knots of miserliness to wealth,
Chenrayzig, help us to develop generosity.

When this body is afflicted by the diseases of the four elements,
Chenrayzig, be the king of physicians.

When we are tormented by terror and fear at the moment of death,
Chenrayzig, encourage us by showing your face.

When we wander in the narrow abyss of the Bardo without a friend,
Chenrayzig, help us to recognize you as our friend.

When we have to go alone among many,
Chenrayzig, guide us to the Pure realms.

When we experience the sufferings in the Karmic Womb,
Chenrayzig, manifest the mansion of light to us.

When I possess the body of an ignorant child,
Chenrayzig, be my supreme guide and friend.

When praying and meditating upon our crown,
Chenrayzig, be our root master.
When relying upon you by meditating upon the lotus in our hearts,
Chenrayzig, be our supreme tutelary deity.

When we face external and internal obstacles and interruptions,
Chenrayzig, be our guide to overcome them.
When we suffer from hunger and thirst,
Chenrayzig, bestow on us whatever accomplishments we wish.
Death will inevitably occur as a result of birth,
Chenrayzig, foretell out future.

As we pray to you with distinct recitation of the Six-syllables,
Chenrayzig, look upon us continuously with your compassion.

OM MA-NI PAY MAY HUNG OM MA-NI PAY MAY HUNG OM MA-
NI PAY MAY HUNG

(Repeat as many times as possible)

Chenrayzig, may we quickly attain the supreme Buddhahood through the
merit of this prayer.

Commentary

Prayers have always played an important role in religious traditions throughout history. In fact, it is wholehearted prayer that influences ones spiritual growth. However, most religious traditions present prayers to an external god for help. Buddhists do not believe in a god as the creator, but they strive to develop the inner potential that can be awakened through various skilful means. The historical Buddha is recognized as an ideal example of a being who obtained Enlightenment.

The Chenrayzig prayer is a form of meditation used to awaken ones mind from the darkness of ignorance which makes us selfish, ill-tempered and greedy. These are the negatives aspects of ones mind that cause all problems. The aim of the prayer is to cultivate universal love and compassion so that one can be awakened to recognize the true nature of ones mind. Prayer enables practitioners to transcend limitations through generating love and concern for other beings. This prayer was extracted from the collected works of Songtsen Gampo (? - 650 A.D.) who is believed to be an emanation of Chenrayzig, the Buddha of Compassion.

The Prayer Liberating Sakya from Disease

All sentient beings equal to space go for refuge to the precious Guru-Buddha. We go for refuge to the Buddha, we go for refuge to the Dharma, and we go for refuge to the Sangha.

We go for refuge to the assembly of Gurus, meditational deities, dakas and dakinis. We go for refuge to the empty clarity of our own minds, the Dharmakaya.

Recite these verses as many times as you are able.

Then recite the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM hundreds of times, as many as you are able.

Then:

May all the diseases that sadden the minds of sentient beings and that result from karma and temporary conditions, such as the harm of spirits, illnesses and the elements, not occur in the realms of the world.

May whatever suffering that comes from life-threatening diseases—which, like a butcher leading an animal to be slaughtered, separate the body from the mind in a mere instant—not occur in the realms of the world.

May all embodied beings be unharmed by acute, chronic and other infectious diseases, the mere sound of whose name terrifies beings as though they were placed inside the mouth of Yama, the lord of death.

May all embodied beings be unharmed by the 80,000 classes of harmful interferers, the 360 evil spirits that harm suddenly, the 424 diseases and so forth.

May whatever suffering that comes from disturbances of the four elements, depriving the body and mind of every pleasure, be totally pacified, and may the body and mind have radiance and power and be endowed with long life, good health and well-being.

By the compassion of the Gurus and Triple Gem, the power of the dakas and dakinis, the Dharma protectors and guardians, and by the strength of the infallibility of karma and its results, may these many dedications and prayers be fulfilled as soon as they are made.

Colophon:

Once an epidemic was spreading from one person to another at the great monastery of the Glorious Sakya (tradition). Whatever the mantric masters tried – effigies, tormas, medicines, mantras, protection amulets, and so forth – had no effect, and the monastery was in danger of annihilation. At that time the master Mahasiddha (T'ang T'ong Gyalpo) performed the 'Space' refuge, recited a number of Manis, and proclaimed this prayer called 'Attainment', during which the entire epidemic immediately ceased in dependence upon its performance. Thereby, it became renowned as the vajra speech radiating masses of clouds of blessing entitled 'The Prayer Liberating Sakya from Disease'.

Sarvamangalam.

May all be auspicious.

Medicine Buddha's Aspiration

Before gaining enlightenment, the Medicine Buddha formed the aspiration,

“May I relieve those afflicted by diseases which destroy life, destroy work, leave families broken, worsen suffering and take happiness away. May I relieve them of their disease and suffering, relieve their inner, outer and secret diseases. May I stop natural calamities and the diseases or unhappiness arising from that. May I be the cause of people being freed from suffering.”

A Prayer to Medicine Buddha

Guru Medicine Buddha

You have taken a vow

to remove every level of mental, emotional, and physical pain
and to replace it with peace, health, strength, well-being and happiness

Because I have this same aim in my life,

I pray you will help me

Please give me your blessing to become like you

May I become you in this world

Two Prayers from the Healing Buddha Sadhanas

O Destroyer, Complete in All Qualities, and Gone Beyond, and you four medicinal goddesses, please pacify immediately the illnesses that afflict me now and help me avoid all future illness.

Fully realized destroyer of all defilements, fully completed Buddha, having fully realized the absolute truth of all phenomena, Buddha Man. Gyi. La Bendurya O. Gyi Gyal. Po. La, to you I prostrate and go for refuge, to you I make offerings.

May your vow to benefit sentient beings now ripen for myself and others.

Homage to Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom

Obeisance to my guru and protector, Manjushri,

Who holds to his heart a scriptural text symbolic of his seeing all things as they are,

Whose intelligence shines forth like the sun, unclouded by the two obscurations,

Who teaches in sixty ways, with the loving compassion of a parent for his only child, all creatures caught in the prison of samsara, confused in the darkness of their ignorance, overwhelmed by their suffering.

You, whose dragon-thunder-like proclamation of Dharma arouses us from the stupor of our afflictions and frees us from the iron chains of our karma;

Who wields the sword of wisdom hewing down suffering wherever its sprouts appear, clearing away the darkness of ignorance;

You, whose princely body is adorned with the one hundred and twelve marks of a Buddha,

Who has completed the stages achieving the highest perfection of a bodhisattva,

Who has been pure from the beginning,

I bow down to you, O Manjushri;

With the brilliance of your wisdom, O compassionate one,
Illuminate the darkness enclosing my mind,
Enlighten my intelligence and wisdom
So that I may gain insight into the Buddha's words and the texts that explain them.

Homage from a Manjushri Sadhana

I make obeisance to your youthful form, O Manjushri,
like that of a dynamic and graceful sixteen year old.
You repose upon the full moon as your cushion
at the center of an expansive, milk-white lotus.
I make obeisance to your speech, O Mighty Fulfiller of Wishes,
So mellifluous to the minds of countless sentient beings,
A lucent euphony to accord with each listener's capacity,
It's multiplicity embellishing the hearing of all fortunate ones.
O Manjushri, I make obeisance to your mind
Wherein is illuminated the entire tapestry of the myriad objects of
knowledge.
It is a tranquil ocean of unfathomable profundity
Of immeasurable breadth, boundless like space itself

The Confession Sutra

Namo: The Declaration of an Awakening Warrior's
Downfalls

I, who am called by the name..., throughout all time seek refuge in the
Spiritual Master;
in the Fully Awakened Being I seek refuge;
in his Truth of Dharma I seek refuge;
in the Spiritual Aspirants I seek refuge.

To the Teacher, the Endowed Transcendent Destroyer, the One Thus-Gone,
the Foe Destroyer, the Completely Perfected, Fully Awakened Being, the
Subduer from the Shakya clan, I pay homage.

To the Great Destroyer with the Adamantine Essence I pay homage.
To the Jewel Radiating Light I pay homage.
To the Ruling King of the Serpent Spirits I pay homage.
To the Leader of the Warriors I pay homage.
To the One Pleased to be a Warrior I pay homage.
To the Jewel Fire I pay homage.
To the Jewel Moonlight I pay homage.
To the One with Vision and a Purpose I pay homage.
To the Jewel Moon I pay homage.
To the Stainless One I pay homage.
To the Bestower of Courage I pay homage.
To the Pure One I pay homage.
To the One who Gives out of Purity I pay homage.
To the Water Deity I pay homage.
To the God of the Water Deities I pay homage.
To the Glorious Good I pay homage.
To the Glorious Sandalwood I pay homage.
To the One of Unlimited Splendor I pay homage.

To the Glorious Light I pay homage.
To the Glorious One without Sorrow I pay homage.
To the Son of the Passionless One I pay homage.
To the Glorious Flower I pay homage.
To the One Thus-Gone who Understands Clearly, Enjoying the Radiant Light of purity I pay homage.
To the One Thus-Gone who Understands Clearly, Enjoying the Radiant Light of the Lotus I pay homage.
To the Glorious Gem I pay homage.
To the Glorious One who is Mindful I pay homage.
To the Glorious One whose Name is Extremely Renowned I pay homage.
To the King of the Victory Banner of the Pinnacle of Sensory Powers I pay homage.
To the Glorious One who Vanquishes Utterly Within I pay homage.
To the One who is Utterly Victorious in Battles Within I pay homage.
To the One who has Transcended by Vanquishing Within I pay homage.
To the Glorious One who Enhances and Illuminates Totally I pay homage.
To the One who Subdues with a Jewel and a Lotus I pay homage.
To the One Thus-Gone, the Foe Destroyer, the Completely Perfected Fully Awakened Being, the King of Powerful Mount Meru who is Firmly Seated upon a Jewel and Lotus I pay homage.

These Endowed Transcendent Destroyers and the rest, in every sphere of the universe throughout the ten directions, the Ones Thus Gone, the Foe Destroyers, the Completely Perfected, Fully Awakened Beings, the Endowed Transcendent Destroyers, however many exist, such as the Fully Awakened Beings who are alive and abide, I beseech them all to heed me:

In this birth and throughout births that have endlessly begun, in all places of birth while spinning through the cycle of existence, I have done wrong deeds throughout every realm, have provoked them to be done, and have rejoiced at their being done. I have stolen the wealth from places of offering, the wealth from Those Intent on Virtue, and the Wealth of those Intent on Virtue in the ten directions, or have provoked such a theft, or have rejoiced in the theft. I have committed the five unbounded heinous actions, have provoked their commitment or have rejoiced at their commitment. I have been

involved in actually taking the path of the ten unwholesome actions, have commanded that it be entered, or have rejoiced at its being entered.

Having been obscured by any obstacles from my previous actions, I shall be led into a realm of hell denizens, or shall be led to a place of birth as an animal, or shall be led to a land of the hungry spirits, or shall be born in a remote irreligious land, or shall be born a barbarian, or shall be born among long-living celestial beings, or shall become incomplete in sensory organs, or shall come to hold wrong views, or I shall become displeased with the presence of a Fully Awakened Being. But now, before the Fully Awakened Beings, the Endowed Transcendent Destroyers who became primordially aware, who became visionary, who became witnesses, who became valid, who see by their knowledge, I acknowledge and lay bare whatever such obstacles from my previous actions I have, all of them, without concealing any, without keeping anything secret, and hereafter I pledge to refrain from such actions.

All Fully Awakened Transcendent Destroyers please heed me: In this birth and throughout births that have endlessly begun in cyclic existence, in other births while turning in the cycle of existence, whatever source of virtue there is in my giving even a morsel of food to just one being who is born as an animal, and whatever source of virtue there is in my maintaining discipline, and whatever source of virtue there is in my abiding in pure conduct, and whatever source of virtue there is in my acting to spiritually ripen sentient beings, and whatever source of virtue there is in activating my mind towards supreme full awakening, and whatever source of virtue there is in unsurpassable pristine awareness, having collected them, brought them together and bound them all fast through dedicating them completely to the unsurpassable, to that of which there is no higher, to that which is even higher than the high, to the supreme surmounting even the supreme, I fully dedicate for the peerless awakening of absolute perfection. Just as the Fully Awakened Transcendent Destroyers of the past have dedicated, and just as the Fully Awakened Transcendent Destroyers who are yet to come will dedicate, and just as the Fully Awakened Transcendent Destroyers living now are dedicating, in the same way do I make this dedication.

All wrongs individually I confess; in all merit I rejoice. All Fully Awakened Beings, I beseech and request you: may I and others realize the ultimate and supreme primordial awareness that is unsurpassable.

Whoever are the supreme men, the Conquerors living now, those of the past and likewise those who are yet to come, praising their excellences, all like a limitless ocean,
I join my palms in prayer, going close to them for refuge.

This completes The Exalted ‘Three Heaps’, a sutra of the Great Vehicle.

Prayers to Vajrasattva

"Lama Dorje Sempa, please purify and remove all harmful actions, obscurations of the mind, faults and transgressions which I and other beings limitless as space have accumulated."

"Protector! Through ignorance and delusion, I have not kept my commitments and have broken them. Lama, Protector, give me refuge. O Lord of beings, Holder of the Vajra, who possesses the true nature of compassion, I take refuge in you. I openly admit all the Vajrayana commitments of body, speech and mind which I have not fulfilled and have also broken, whether they be primary or secondary commitments. Grant me your blessing so that I am purified, and all harmful actions, obscurations of the mind, faults and transgressions are removed."

Prayers for the Time of Death and Transition

From *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, by Sogyal Rinpoche

Practice One –

First make sure you are comfortable, and assume the meditative posture. If you are doing this practice as you are coming close to death, just sit as comfortably as you are able, or practice lying down. Then bring your mind home, release, and relax completely.

1. In the sky in front of you, invoke the embodiment of whatever truth you believe in, in the form of radiant light. Choose whichever divine being or saint you feel close to. If you are a Buddhist, invoke a buddha with whom you feel an intimate connection. If you are a practicing Christian, feel with all your heart the vivid, immediate presence of God, the Holy Spirit, Jesus, or the Virgin Mary. If you don't feel linked with any particular spiritual figure, simply imagine a form of pure golden light in the sky before you. The important point is that you consider the being you are visualizing or whose presence you feel *is* the embodiment of the truth, wisdom, and compassion of all the buddhas, saints, masters, and enlightened beings. Don't worry if you cannot visualize them very clearly, just fill your heart with their presence and trust that they are there.

2. Then focus your mind, heart, and soul on the presence you have invoked, and pray:

‘Through your blessing, grace, and guidance, through the power of the light that streams from you:

May all my negative karma, destructive emotions, obscurations, and blockages be purified and removed,

May I know myself forgiven for all the harm I may have thought and done,

May I accomplish this profound practice of phowa, and die a good and peaceful death,
And through the triumph of my death, may I be able to benefit all other beings, living or dead. ‘

3. Now imagine that the presence of light you have invoked is so moved by your sincere and heartfelt prayer that he or she responds with a loving smile and sends out love and compassion in a stream of rays of light from his or her heart. As these touch and penetrate you, they cleanse and purify all your negative karma, destructive emotions, and obscurations, which are the causes of suffering. You see and feel that you are totally immersed in light.

4. You are now completely purified and completely healed by the light streaming from the presence. Consider that your very body, itself created by karma, now dissolves completely into light.

5. The body of light you now are soars up into the sky and merges, inseparably, with the blissful presence of light.

6. Remain in that state of oneness with the presence for as long as possible.

Practice Two

1. To do this practice even more simply, begin as before by resting quietly, and then invoke the presence of the embodiment of truth.

2. Imagine your consciousness as a sphere of light at your heart, which flashes out from you like a shooting star, and flies into the heart of the presence in front of you.

3. It dissolves and merges with the presence.

Through this practice you are investing your mind in the wisdom mind of the Buddha or enlightened being, which is the same as surrendering your soul into the nature of God. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche says this is like casting a pebble into a lake; think of it plummeting down into the water, deeper and

deeper. Imagine that through the blessing your mind is transformed into the wisdom mind of this enlightened presence.

Practice Three

The most essential way to do the practice is this: Simply merge your mind with the wisdom mind of the pure presence. Consider: "My mind and the mind of the Buddha are one."

Choose whichever one of these version of the phowa feels more comfortable, or has most appeal for you at any particular moment. Sometimes the most powerful practices can be the most simple. But whichever one you choose, remember that it is essential to take the time now to become familiar with this practice. How else will you have the confidence to do it for yourself or others at the moment of death? My master Jamyang Khyentse wrote, "If you meditate and practice in this manner always, at the moment of death it will come easier."

In fact you should be so familiar with the practice of phowa that it becomes a natural reflex, your second nature. If you have seen the film Gandhi, you will know that when he was shot, his immediate response was to call out: "Ram...Ram!" which is, in the Hindu tradition, the sacred name of God. Remember that we never know how we will die, or if we will be given the time to recall any kind of practice at all. What time will we have, for example, if we smash our car into a truck at 100 mph on the freeway? There won't be a second then to think about how to do phowa, or to check the instructions in this book. Either we are familiar with the phowa or we are not. There is a simple way to gauge this: Just look at your reactions when you are in a critical situation or in a moment of crisis, such as an earthquake, or in a nightmare. Do you respond with the practice or don't you? And if you do, how stable and confident is your practice?

I remember a student of mine in America who went out riding one day. The horse threw her; her foot got stuck in the stirrup, and she was dragged along the ground. Her mind went blank. She tried desperately to recall some

practice, but nothing at all would come. She grew terrified. What was good about that terror was that it made her realize that her practice had to become her second nature. This was the lesson she had to learn; it is the lesson, in fact, we all have to learn. Practice phowa as intensively as you can, until you can be sure you will react with it to any unforeseen event. This will make certain that whenever death comes, you will be as ready as you can be.

Using the Essential Phowa Practice to Help the Dying

How can we use this practice to help someone who is dying?

The principle and the sequence of the practice are exactly the same; the only difference is that you visualize the Buddha or spiritual figure above the head of the dying person.

Imagine that the rays of light pour down onto the dying person, purifying his or her whole being, and then he or she dissolves into light and merges with the spiritual presence.

Do this practice throughout your loved one's illness, and especially (and most important) when the person is breathing their last breath, or as soon as possible after breathing stops and before the body is touched or disturbed in any way. If the dying person knows you are going to do this practice for them, and knows what it is, it can be a great source of inspiration and comfort.

Sit quietly with the dying person, and offer a candle or light in front of a picture or statue of Buddha or Christ or the Virgin Mary. Then do the practice for them. You can be doing the practice quietly, and the person need not even know about it; on the other hand, if he or she is open to it, as sometimes dying people are, share the practice and explain how to do it.

A prayer of forgiveness and vow

From time without beginning, due to ignorance, craving, and aversion, I have done injury to myself and others. Here and now I acknowledge and accept responsibility for my actions. I pardon others for the suffering they have inflicted out of confusion, desire, and hatred, and I pray that they also forgive me for any pain I may have caused them to endure. All offences, whether my fault or another's, here and now I put behind me. I resolve henceforth to do no harm, and to do good so far as wisdom and circumstance permit.

From 'The Transference of Consciousness', by Lama Yeshe

You should remember the great protective power of the three principle paths. For example, if you have developed the actual mind of bodhicitta, it doesn't matter what you do at the time of death: you no longer have anything to worry about. Merely pray, 'May I be reborn in whatever place is most beneficial for other sentient beings. Oh, buddhas and bodhisattvas, please take me to wherever I can be most useful.'

Swift Return and Long Life Prayers

Swift Return Prayers for Bokar Rinpoche, and Geshe Kenrab Tobgye

A Concise Prayer for a Swift Return, by Khenpo Lodro Donyod Rinpoche

August 22, 2004

Om Soti

Eradicator of all fears, grantor of the unimpeded fulfillment of all wishes,
Our one mother Tara, pray heed this call!
Please manifest your enlightened activity, so that the lama's supreme
emanation,
Our one father, the radiant sun [of beings], will swiftly dawn again!

Thus, the most humble disciple of the protector himself, Lodro Donyod, a
khenpo merely in name, has one-pointedly prayed.

These provisional translations were attempted by Ngodup T. Burkhar and
Eric Triebelhorn.

Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes- Prayer for a Swift Return

O Gurus abiding in the ten directions' infinite realms,
Buddhas, bodhisattvas, shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and dharmapalas -
Pray oceanic sources of refuge generate the power of compassion
To grant siddhi of our desired wishes' fulfilment here and now!

With long familiar excellent wisdom's force flourishing
And enthusiasm fully firm in accomplishing others' welfare,
Skilled in bearing Buddha's teachings aloft to the ten directions,
I pray at the feet of the Venerable Guru.

Protector, bearing witness for the conquerors and bodhisattvas,
You are determined always to fulfil the welfare of others;
Yet your having left me and other faithful disciples
To enter the peaceful sphere torments us so!

But since it is never possible that great beings
At any time waver from achieving others' welfare
For trainees of this realm born from your speech -
May you swiftly show the young excellent face of your rebirth!

Scholarly, moral and kind, with teaching, debate and composition,
Masterfully spreading the essence of sutra and tantra to the ten directions
As Buddha's supreme representative for the teachings -
May the bright smiling young moon of your re-emanation quickly come!

COLOPHON: This prayer for the swift return of the great spiritual guide of Ganden Jangste Monastery's Gowo College, Geshe Kenrab Tobgye, whose supreme form has passed to peace, was requested on behalf of all his dharma centres, Gowo College of Ganden Jangste, and Losang Donden of the Tseten Norbu household, together with offerings. Geshe Nyima Gyeltsen composed it based on prayers for swift return composed by His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama .

Translated from Tibetan by David Molk - December 13, 1993

Long Life Prayers for H.H. The Dalai Lama, and For All of the Great Lamas in the World Today

Brief Long-Life Prayer for His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

In this Pure Land surrounded by the snowy mountains
You are the source of all benefit and happiness, without exception.
All powerful Avalokiteshvara, Tenzin Gyatso,
May you stay immovable until Samsara becomes exhausted.

Long Life Prayer for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His Holiness the Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche, His Holiness the Drikung Kyabgon Chungtsang Rinpoche, and All of the Great Lamas in the World Today who bestow upon us the blessings of the Sublime Dharma

We pray for the long life of these holy and sublime Lamas, who are not to be differentiated from the exalted Vajradhara, the Lord who encompasses all the sacred lineages.

From this day until all of the vast ocean of samsara has been completely emptied,
May they abide secure on their pure lotus seats, free from the flaws of worldliness;
May they abide secure on their radiant solar seats, illuminating all without darkness or shadow;
May they abide secure on their luminous lunar seats, clearing away the darkness of ignorance.

Oh sublime Lamas, undifferentiated from the three bodies of the Enlightened One,
we pray that you abide here on the throne of the sacred doctrine of the Great Vehicle,
We pray that you abide here as the sublime regents of our teacher, Buddha Shakyamuni,
We pray that you abide here to turn the wheel of the sublime Dharma,
We pray that you abide here for the benefit and welfare of the living beings of the six realms,
We pray that you abide here until all realms of samsara have been emptied,
We pray that you do not retire from this world to accept the peace of nirvana.

Kind Lamas, mighty guardians of the sacred teachings, may your lives in this world be safe and secure,
that you may carry the all conquering banner of the sacred teachings to the very pinnacle of existence,
that the solar radiance of the Dharma will illuminate every world,
whether near or far off,
that each and every being, throughout the universe, will gain true and lasting peace,
happiness and fulfillment.

Part V. Dedication Prayers

From Milarepa

'May peace harmonious bless this land;
May it be ever free from maladies and war;
May there be harvest rich, and increased yield of grain;
May everyone delight in righteousness;
May no perverted thought find entry to your minds;
May all your thoughts e'er pious be and lead
to your success religiously.'

By His Holiness the Dalai Lama, from 'The Direct and Unmistaken Method', after Shantideva

May all beings everywhere,
Plagued by sufferings of body and mind,
Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy
By virtue of my merits.

May no living creature suffer,
Commit evil or ever fall ill.
May no one be afraid or belittled,
With a mind weighed down by depression.

May the blind see forms,
And the deaf hear sounds.
May those whose bodies are worn with toil
Be restored on finding repose.

May the naked find clothing,
The hungry find food.
May the thirsty find water
And delicious drinks.

May the poor find wealth,
Those weak with sorrow find joy.
May the forlorn find hope,
Constant happiness and prosperity.

May there be timely rains
And bountiful harvests.
May all medicines be effective
And wholesome prayers bear fruit.

May all who are sick and ill
Quickly be freed from their ailments.

Whatever diseases there are in the world,
May they never occur again.

May the frightened cease to be afraid
And those bound be freed.
May the powerless find power
And may people think of benefiting each other.

Words of Truth

A Prayer Composed by His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, The Fourteenth Dalai
Lama of Tibet

Honoring and Invoking the Great Compassion
of the Three Jewels; the Buddha, the Teachings,
and the Spiritual Community

O Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and disciples
of the past, present, and future:
Having remarkable qualities
Immeasurably vast as the ocean,
Who regard all helpless sentient beings
as your only child;
Please consider the truth of my anguished pleas.

Buddha's full teachings dispel the pain of worldly
existence and self-oriented peace;
May they flourish, spreading prosperity and happiness through-
out this spacious world.
O holders of the Dharma: scholars
and realized practitioners;
May your ten fold virtuous practice prevail.

Humble sentient beings, tormented
by sufferings without cease,
Completely suppressed by seemingly endless
and terribly intense, negative deeds,
May all their fears from unbearable war, famine,
and disease be pacified,
To freely breathe an ocean of happiness and well-being.
And particularly the pious people
of the Land of Snows who, through various means,

Are mercilessly destroyed by barbaric hordes
on the side of darkness,
Kindly let the power of your compassion arise,
To quickly stem the flow of blood and tears.

Those unrelentingly cruel ones, objects of compassion,
Maddened by delusion's evils,
wantonly destroy themselves and others;
May they achieve the eye of wisdom,
knowing what must be done and undone,
And abide in the glory of friendship and love.

May this heartfelt wish of total freedom for all Tibet,
Which has been awaited for a long time,
be spontaneously fulfilled;
Please grant soon the good fortune to enjoy
The happy celebration of spiritual with temporal rule.

O protector Chenrezig, compassionately care for
Those who have undergone myriad hardships,
Completely sacrificing their most cherished lives,
bodies, and wealth,
For the sake of the teachings, practitioners,
people, and nation.

Thus, the protector Chenrezig made vast prayers
Before the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
To fully embrace the Land of Snows;
May the good results of these prayers now quickly appear.
By the profound interdependence of emptiness
and relative forms,
Together with the force of great compassion
in the Three Jewels and their Words of Truth,
And through the power
of the infallible law of actions and their fruits,
May this truthful prayer be unhindered
and quickly fulfilled.

This prayer, Words of Truth, was composed by His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet, on 29 September 1960 at his temporary headquarters in the Swarg Ashram at Dharamsala, Kangra District, Himachal State, India. This prayer for restoring peace, the Buddhist teachings, and the culture and self-determination of the Tibetan people in their homeland was written after repeated requests by Tibetan government officials along with the unanimous consensus of the monastic and lay communities.

The Door of Happiness – Prayer for the Happiness of All Sentient Beings, by Ngor Kunga Zangpo

May the priceless teachings of the Omniscient One, the only' door through which happiness ever appears to living beings, never decline in any place or time, but spread forth to every direction's end.

May the span of life be lengthened and enhanced for our peerless teachers and spiritual friends who cherish the Buddha's religion more than their lives and whose compassion and wisdom are measureless.

May the assemblies of monks who practice His teaching always endure and their works pervade the ten directions, for they point out to beings the path of virtue and carry the great burden of teaching and meditation.

May all human beings be free from fears of old age, disease and death, but live instead with right views of existence in this world. May their minds grow to love one another, and limitless joys increase always for all.

May the cities of the earth be beautiful, strung with rows of prayer flags, white and rippling in gentle breezes; may their inhabitants not be poor but wear the fine clothes and jewels they long to have.

May the eyes of living beings be gladdened by skies made splendid by clouds that lightnings garland, while on earth below, the peacocks dance with joy as showers of rain, falling gently, approach.

May the mountains be adorned by rippling grasses, clusters of wildflowers, and by falling waters, and the valleys overflow with grains and commingling herds, while men sing songs that spring forth from joy; in freedom from pride, from wars and discord.

May the rulers govern well in peaceful ways and peoples heed their rulers with unfeigned respect so that, all inner and outer conflicts set at rest, well-being prevails as it did in the Age of Perfection.

May every temple be adorned by many images of the Enlightened One and by books of holy scripture; may there the great rain of worship be increased by infinite clouds of offerings offered by gods

May the chanting and study of scriptures increase in every monastery, each of them filled with spiritual friends and monks in saffron robes who uphold the teachings of the sage and devote their days to discussing, explaining, and writing about His words.

May the Holy Teaching of the Blessed Enlightened One be enhanced by lay disciples, by novices, monks, and nuns, each endowed with moral conduct that is flawlessly pure and diligent in study, reflection, and meditation.

May meditators who have given up every distraction be increased by those attainments of insight that follow renunciation; away from all bustle and harm, may they ever dwell in tranquil places of solitude.

May this, our own circle of meditators, whose prayers are offered with special faith, be blessed with prosperity untainted by wrong livelihood, and may our spans of life and our understanding of Dharma increase.

May there also arise within me spiritual qualities of learning and realization and the perfection of every principle which the Enlightened Ones have taught, through my own wholehearted performance of giving, moral conduct, patience, diligence, meditation, and highest wisdom.

For the sake of others, may I too grow in harmony with the Holy Teaching and gather others together through kind words and generous deeds; by the power of right explanation, may their actions and mine become attuned to the Way.

This prayer that I offer on behalf of all is that every obstacle to Dharma may vanish and every auspicious condition completely prevail; may every virtue that the Sage has praised increase always in every way!

By the power of the compassionate blessings of the holy masters, by the truth of the Ultimate Reality of all Dharmas, and by the purity of our own noble resolve, may our prayers become actuality.

(This prayer for the happiness of all living beings was written by the Venerable Master, Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo, who established the famous hermitage of Ngor Evam in 1434. He was an emanation of the Greatly Compassionate One and one of the Sakya Order's most illustrious saints. Because it expresses the true intent of all Buddhist scriptures, i.e. the aspiration to bring about true happiness and well-being of all beings without exception, this prayer is usually chanted by Sakya monks at the close of each assembly.)

A Selection of Dedication Prayers from Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Dedication

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to bring benefit as limitless as the sky to all sentient beings, just as Lama Tsong Khapa did, by having the same qualities within me that Lama Tsong Khapa had, from now on in all my future lifetimes.”

It is extremely important to do this dedication every day in your daily life. You can understand the importance of this prayer by reading Lama Tsong Khapa’s life story and especially by studying his sutra and tantra teachings. Actually, you can understand its importance just by understanding lam-rim teachings correctly.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, no matter which universe, world, country, area or place I am, simply by my being there, may the sentient beings in that universe, world, country, area or place never ever be reborn in the lower realms. May they immediately be liberated from all diseases, spirit harms, negative karma and defilements, actualize the whole path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, and quickly achieve enlightenment.

“Simply by my being there, may the sentient beings in that universe, world, country, area or place who are blind immediately be able to see; may those who are lame immediately be able to walk; may those in a coma immediately wake up and recover; and may those who have cancer or AIDS immediately be healed. Simply by being there in that universe, world, country, area or place, may I be able to bring all these benefits.

May I bring about whatever is most beneficial. May those with relationship problems become harmonious. May those who need to find a guru find a guru. May those who need teachings be able to receive teachings. May those living in poverty immediately receive wealth.

May those unable to find a job find one. May everyone achieve perfect happiness. In this way, may I become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings, like the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha, who brings infinite benefit to sentient beings.

“I will dedicate all the merits as the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times have dedicated their merits, and as Samantabhadra and Manjughosha realize. I dedicate all my merits in the best way to quickly enlighten all sentient beings.”

Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat

One piece of advice from His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche is for you, at the end of your practice, to give away all your merits to all sentient beings. Give all your merits, including all the happiness up to enlightenment that results from those merits, to all sentient beings. Give everything to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every asura being, every sura being and every intermediate state being.

Doing this, we again collect infinite merit...

Dedication

By generating bodhicitta, making charity to all sentient beings, and making the actual light offerings to the gurus, the Triple Gem and all the holy objects in the ten directions, you have accumulated infinite merit, which should therefore be dedicated:

“Due to this merit, may the light rays of the five wisdoms completely purify all the degenerated samaya vows of those for whom I promised to pray, of those who pray to me, of those whose names I have received to pray for, principally servants, benefactors and disciples, and of all remaining migratory beings, living or dead, right now.

“May all the sufferings of the evil gone realms cease right now.

“May the three realms of samsara be empty right now.

“May all impure minds and their obscurations be purified.

“May all impure appearances be purified.

“May the five holy bodies and wisdom spontaneously arise.

“Due to these infinite merits, may whatever sufferings sentient beings have ripen on me right now. May whatever happiness and virtue I have accumulated, including all the realizations of the path and the highest goal enlightenment, be received by each hell being, preta, animal, human, asura and sura right now.”

Having dedicated in this way, you have accumulated infinite merit, so rejoice.

“May the precious sublime thought of enlightenment, the source of all success and happiness for myself and all other sentient beings, be generated without even a second’s delay. May that which has been generated increase more and more without degeneration.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which are empty from their own side, may the I, which is empty from its own side, achieve enlightenment, which is empty from its own side, and lead all sentient beings, who are

empty from their own side, to that enlightenment, by myself, alone.

“Whatever white virtues I have thus created, I dedicate as causes enabling me to uphold the holy Dharma of scriptures and insights and to fulfill without exception the prayers and deeds of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times.

“By the force of this merit, in all my lives may I never be parted from Mahayana’s four spheres, and may I reach the end of my journey along the paths of renunciation, bodhicitta, the pure view and the two stages.”

Final dedication prayers

“Due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to unbetraying dependent arising and due to my special attitude, may all my pure prayers be accomplished immediately.

“With Lama Tsong Khapa as our direct guru in all future lifetimes, may I, my family and all other sentient beings never be separated from the complete pure path praised by all victorious ones.

“Due to the merits of myself and others, may the victorious teachings of Lama Tsong Khapa, Losang Dragpa, flourish for a long time. May all the centers and projects of the FPMT immediately receive all the conditions necessary to preserve and spread these teachings. May all obstacles be pacified and may the FPMT organization in general and the meditation centers in particular—all our activities to preserve and spread the Dharma, particularly Lama Tsong Khapa’s teachings—cause these teachings to continue without degeneration and to spread in the minds of all sentient beings.

May those who have sacrificed their lives to benefit others through this organization have long, healthy lives, may all their activities please the virtuous friend, and in all their lives, may they always be guided by perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friends. May all their wishes succeed immediately, in accordance with the holy Dharma.”

Dedication

Dedicate the merits with the intense understanding that you yourself, the action and the object of charity are all merely labeled by the mind; that nothing in the slightest exists from above the object; and that in name, cause and result, dependent arising is unbetraying.

Thinking of the meaning of the words, slowly recite the following:

“Due to all these merits, may the holy enlightened beings be the guide and refuge of the pitiful sentient beings, who suffer because of contaminated cause and have no guide or refuge.

“Due to the merits accumulated in the three times and the merit of my having done this practice, may I become the holy guide and refuge for all pitiful migratory beings.

“For all the narak beings tormented by heat, may I become rain and protect them with coolness. For all the narak beings suffering from cold, may I become the supreme sun eliminating torment.

“May I become oceans of food and drink of a hundred tastes and give breath to all the pretas.

“May I become the sublime light eliminating the darkness of ignorance of those used for work and food (animals).

“May I become armor for those who suffer jealousy, quarrel and receive rainfalls of arrows (asuras).

“And may I become the stable ship liberating those for whom the tidal wave of death means downfall (suras).

“To those attacked by the intense contagious diseases of terrifying rebirth, old age, sickness and death, may I become the supreme medicine eliminating all disease of disturbing thoughts.

“To those with poverty of merit and no means of living, may I become the great treasure granting all wishes.

“To those tormented by separation from relatives and friends, may I become steadfast relatives and friends.

“In all my lifetimes may I be able to receive a perfect body with freedoms and riches, and hold the virtuous friend, the wish-granting jewel, on my crown. By entering the boat of listening, reflecting and meditating, may I go to the land of the three kayas.

“I dedicate the merits of having done this practice to accomplish every single prayer and action of the Ones Gone to Bliss and the bodhisattvas of the three times, and to cause the holy Dharma of scriptural understanding and realization to be upheld.

“Due to this, in all my lifetimes may I never be separated from the four wheels of the supreme vehicle [residing in places where enlightened beings are present and you have facilities for Dharma practice such as food and teachings; having a guru; accomplishing your past vows; and already having a great accumulation of merit] and complete the principles of the path—the determination to be free, the thought of enlightenment, perfect view and the two stages.”

It is said that it is more difficult to meet the sutra and tantra teachings of Lama Tsong Khapa, which are refined with the three analyses, than it is to find a perfect human body, receive many hundreds of thousands of times the wealth of Brahma, Indra, wheel-turning kings and so forth, meet the teachings of the buddha, or be born in the special buddha field of Pure Sky Enjoyment (Dagpa Kachö). Therefore, the reliable holy beings of the past say with one voice that it is extremely important to pray to meet these teachings. There are elaborate prayers for this, but here is a condensed one written by the Fifth Dalai Lama:

“May I and all others be able to live lives of pure moral conduct, like Lama Tsong Khapa himself, train our minds in bodhicitta and live in pure view and conduct. In this way may we be able to complete our lives without corrupting the pure wisdom of the Second Buddha’s teachings.”

From The Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, by Shantideva

For as long as space endures
and for as long as living beings remain,
until then may I too abide
to dispel the misery of the world.

Dedication Prayers from the commentary on the White Tara
Sadhana, by Geshe Wangdu, and from the White Tara Sadhana

I pray that, by the power of these prayers and praises,
for all beings and myself, wherever they may dwell,
illness, demons, poverty, quarrels and wars
may be pacified,
May the Dharma and good fortune flourish

If I see the signs of untimely death, let me straight
away clearly see the form of Mother Tara, the wish-
fulfilling wheel, and, crushing the might of the Lord
of Death, quickly become a deathless vajradhara.

Prayer for the Doctrine to Flourish for Long

Perhaps in a past life to benefit beings
I made great efforts in difficult practices
and sacrificed even my own happiness for them.
If so, may this cause the doctrine to flourish for long.

Perhaps in a past life to benefit the sick
I dedicated even necessities of life
to protect living beings from weakness and sorrow.
If so, may this cause the doctrine to flourish for long.

Perhaps in a past life to accomplish enlightenment
I renounced sons, daughters, wives,
wealth, elephants and chariots.
If so, may this cause the doctrine to flourish for long.

Perhaps I once made auspicious offerings
to the Fully Awakened Buddhas, the Pratyekabuddhas,
Sravaka Arhants or my elders.
If so, may this cause the doctrine to flourish for long.

Perhaps in the past for countless aeons
I underwent endless hardships and trials
in the search for the meaning of true enlightenment.
If so, may this cause the doctrine to flourish for long.

Perhaps I once practiced discipline and penance,
applied myself to austere yogas,
or devoted myself to a Buddha of the ten directions.
If so, may this cause the doctrine to flourish for long.

Perhaps I once exerted great perseverance
and through constance in practice overcame a fault.
If so, may this cause the doctrine to flourish for long,
that countless living beings may attain to freedom.

Perhaps I once showed strength in patience
and practiced forbearance when heavily pressed
by beings made cruel in this degenerate age.
If so, may this cause the doctrine to flourish for long.

Perhaps I once practiced profound meditation
on the essence of some formless absorption
or gained some of the millions of samadhis.
If so, may this cause the doctrine to flourish for long.

Perhaps in a previous lifetime to gain wisdom
I retired to the forests and practiced intensely;
and perhaps I even expounded the healing Dharma.
If so, may this cause the doctrine to flourish for long.

Perhaps out of compassion I once sacrificed
my flesh and blood, or even my life;
or perhaps I gave away the limbs of my body.
If so, may this cause the Dharmic ways to thrive.

Perhaps toward sentient beings evil and cruel
I practiced love and thus ripened their minds,
and turned them toward one of the Three Vehicles.
If so, may this cause the supreme gift of the Dharma to thrive.

Perhaps by the four ways of benefiting living beings
I freed some from the fires of conflicting emotions
and destroyed evil thoughts from within others.
If so, may I and those around me live for long.

Perhaps in a previous life I freed a Tirthika
from the chaotic waters of his wrong views
and placed him within clear understanding.
If so, may I and those around me gain renown
and may the sublime doctrine shine for long.

Prayer for Buddha's Teachings to Flow Throughout the Length and Breadth of the West

by Yongdzin Ling Rinpoche translated by Alexander Berzin, September
2001

By the force of inspiration from the unfailing Three Supreme Gems
and of the truth of our taking universal responsibility,
May the precious Buddhist teachings flow and flourish
In all lands throughout the length and breadth of the West.

For all people living there, together with their near ones,
Who engage in the teachings, with confidence and respect,
May all hindrances to their pure Dharma practice disperse
And an excellent network of favorable conditions
grow like the waxing moon.

And especially for those who work on the means to bring about the flow and
flourishing of the Triumphant One's teachings,
the spring of all benefit and joy,
May they never be oppressed by the hordes of interference and adverse
conditions
And may this spontaneously happen just as we have hoped and wished.

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25. Sharing Merits, from Bhavana Vandana
26. Dedication from 'A Chanting Guide' of the Dhammayut Order
27. From 'Teachings of The Buddha', edited by Jack Kornfield: A Blessing
Chant; Sharing Blessings; Shambhala Publications

Part II. The Bodhisattva Vow, and Producing the Mahayana Motivation

28. From 'Preparing for Tantra, by Chadragomin; The Mahayana Sutra and
Tantra Press

29. From A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, from Chapter 1, The Benefits of the Awakening Mind, by Shantideva; Stephen Batchelor translation, published by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives
30. Making Space with Bodhicitta, by Lama Yeshe, originally published in Wisdom Energy II, Wisdom Publications
31. Stabilizing in the Bodhimind, by Shantideva, from The Sublime Path of the Victorious Ones; Library of Tibetan Works and Archives
32. From 'A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, by Shantideva; Stephen Batchelor translation, The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives
33. The Excellence of Meditation upon the Bodhimind, by The Seventh Dalai Lama; Snow Lion Publications
34. A Daily Prayer, from Advice from A Spiritual Friend; Wisdom Publications
35. A Prayer by His Holiness The Dalai Lama, from Ethics for a New Millenium; Riverhead Books

Selections for Contemplation:

36. I Live in This World; J.E.
37. Tonglen Practice - from The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, by Sogyal Rinpoche; Harper San Francisco
38. From Ultimate Healing, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche; Wisdom Publications
39. Taking and Giving Prayer; J.E.
40. Nine Short Prayers; ibid

41. This is what bodhicitta does; *ibid*
42. Twenty-Two Illustrations of the Mind of Enlightenment, by Haribhadra; from Haribhadra's Commentary on The Ornament of Insight, by Asanga; translated by Gavin Kilty
43. Three bodhicitta poems; J.E.
44. Prayers of Universal Aspiration; translated by Jampa Gendun, 1985
45. A Bodhisattva's Garland of Jewels, by Atisha, this translation by Jesse Fenton
46. Contemplation: Twenty-Seven Verses On Mind Training, by Tsong Khapa, from Mother of the Buddhas, by Les Hixon; Quest Books
47. Aryasura's Aspirational Prayer in Seventy Stanzas; Library of Tibetan Works and Archives

Part III. Prayer in Zen; Prayer in Japanese Buddhism; Prayer in the Chinese, and Vietnamese Mahayana Tradition; and, Prayer in Pure Land Buddhism

Prayer in Zen

48. From 'Not Always So', by Shunryu Suzuki, from the chapter entitled, 'Supported From Within'; Harper Collins
49. Selections from 'Opening the Hand of Thought', by Uchiyama Roshi, On Vow; Penguin Books
50. Contemplation: Inspiring Yourself to Practice, by Won Hyo; English translation by Wonmyong Sunim and Mark Mueller

51. From Dogen's teacher, Nyojo, as quoted in *Classics of Buddhism and Zen*; translated by Thomas Cleary, Shambhala Publications
52. From *The Bodhisattva Ceremony* (San Francisco Zen Center)
53. To-Rei Zenji's Bodhisattva Vow, from the *Diamond Sangha Sutras*
54. The Meal Chant, 2 versions – from the San Francisco Zen Center, and from the Diamond Sangha
55. Small Verses Frequently Used at Zen Center: Robe Chant; Before Lecture, and After Lecture Chant; from the San Francisco Zen Center
56. Selections from 'Shikantaza', by Dogen, and Keizan Jokin Zenji; Sotoshu Shumicho

Prayer in Japanese Buddhism

57. Jizo Bodhisattva – Protector of Little Ones, by Jan Chozen Bayes; *Voices Across Boundaries* Vol.1 No.2
58. The Jizo Ritual – from the website prochoiceconnection.com

Prayer in the Chinese and Vietnamese Mahayana Tradition

59. The Universal Door Chapter from *The Lotus Sutra*, from *The Plum Village Chanting and Recitation Book*; Parallax Press
60. From *The Great Compassion Repentance Service*, from nanhua.co.za
61. The Great Compassion Dharani,

62. Evoking the Bodhisattvas' Names, from *The Plum Village Chanting and Recitation Book*; Parallax Press.
63. *May the Day Be Well*, *ibid.*
64. *Beginning Anew*, *ibid.*
65. *The Refuge Chant*, *ibid.*
66. *Sutra Opening Verse*, and *Sutra Closing Verse*, *ibid.*
67. *Incense Offering*, and *Bowing*, *ibid.*
68. *A Prayer* by Thich Nhat Hanh, 1976

Prayer in Pure Land Buddhism

69. *From An Introduction to Pure Land Buddhism*, by J.C. Cleary
70. Selections from 'Pure Land Buddhism – The Path of Serene Trust'
71. A quote by Master T'ien-Ju Wei-Tse, *ibid.*
72. *Self Power, Other Power I* – from the Amitabha Pureland website
73. *Self Power, Other Power II* – from *Zen Philosophy, Zen Practice*, by Thich Thien-An, Dharma Publishing
74. *Prayers From 'A Daily Pure Land Practice'*

Part IV. Prayers in the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition:

Verses for Training the Mind; Lam Rim Prayers; Guru Yoga; Prayers for Accomplishment in Meditation; Prayers to different Deities, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; Prayers for the time of death and transition; Swift Return and Long Life Prayers

Verses for Training the Mind

75. The Four Immeasurables, traditional
76. Eight Verses for Training the Mind, by Geshe Langri Tangpa, my own version
77. The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas, by Togmay Sangpo

Lam Rim Prayers

78. The Foundation of All Good Qualities, by Tsong-Khapa, translated by Jampäl Lhundrup, from *Essential Buddhist Prayers: An FPMT Prayer Book*, Volume 1, 2001.
79. Lam Rim Prayer, given to Anila Ann, *Pitaka Newsletter* April 1999

Guru Yoga

80. About Guru Yoga, from *An Introduction to Tantra*, by Lama Yeshe; Wisdom Publications

81. Calling the Lama From Afar, from Khadro.net
82. A Prayer to Tsong Khapa
82. Three Guru Yoga Prayers – One - from The Vajrasattva Sadhana, from the Tibetan Buddhist Center KDK; two and three, J.E.
83. A Prayer By Which to Recognize My Faults and Keep the Objects of Refuge in Mind – by H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche, Translation by Mike Dickman
84. A Short Song of the Six Similes to Satisfy the Heartfelt Yearning of Devoted Disciples, by Bokar Rinpoche
85. The Karma Kagyu Lineage Prayer

Prayers for Accomplishment in Meditation

86. The Heart - Essence of the Great Masters, by H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche, Translation by Translated by Bhakha Tulku Rinpoche and Constance Wilkinson.
87. The Aspiration Prayer for the Attainment of Mahamudra, by The Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje

Prayers to different Deities, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

88. From Chenrezig, Lord of Love by Bokar Rinpoche, published by Clear Point Press
89. Four Line Prayer to Tara; traditional

90. Prayer to Tara; J.E.
91. The Twenty-One Verses in Praise of Tara; from Selected Works of the Dalai Lama I, translated by Glenn Mullin; Snow Lion Publications
92. A Requesting Prayer to Tara, from Ven. Thubten Chodron's Pearl of Wisdom, Book II
93. A Song of Longing for Tara, the Infallible, by Lobsang Tenpey Gyaltzen, translated by Lama Thubten Yeshe, from How to Free Your Mind, by Venerable Thubten Chodron; Snow Lion Publications
94. A Deity for All Reasons; J.E.
95. Request to the Supreme Compassionate One, written by the Tibetan monk, Pu. Lha
96. Prayers from the Chenrezig Sadhana: Refuge Prayer; Prayer of Refuge and to generate bodhicitta; Homage; The Seven-Branch Prayer; Prayer to Chenrezig I; The Six-Realm Prayer, by Tang tong Gyalpo; Prayer to Chenrezig II; Dedication Prayer; from the Chenrezig Sadhana, KDK
97. Request Prayer from A Meditation on 1000-Armed Chenrezig from Ven. Thubten Chodron's Pearl of Wisdom, Book II
98. Prayer to Chenrayzig, the Buddha of Compassion, by King Songtsen Gampo, translated and with a commentary by Lama Thubten Choedak
99. The Prayer Liberating Sakya from Disease, by T'ang Tong Gyalpo; translated and edited by George Churinoff; Wisdom Publications
100. Medicine Buddha's Aspiration; from the website tsemtulku.com
101. A Prayer to Medicine Buddha; J.E.
102. Two Prayers from the Healing Buddha Sadhanas, used in FPMT centers

103. Homage to Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom; *ibid.*
104. Homage from a Manjushri Sadhana
105. The Confession Sutra, translated by Brian Beresford, from Mahayana Purification, published by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives
106. Prayers to Vajrasattva, from the Vajrasattva Sadhana, KDK

Prayers for the Time of Death and Transition

107. From *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, by Sogyal Rinpoche; Harper San Francisco
108. A prayer of forgiveness and vow, source unknown
109. From 'The Transference of Consciousness', by Lama Yeshe; Wisdom Publications

Swift Return and Long Life Prayers

110. Swift Return Prayer for Bokar Rinpoche, by Kenpo Donyod, translations by Ngodup T. Burkhar and Eric Triebelhorn
111. Swift Return Prayer for Geshe Kenrab Tobgye, translated from Tibetan by David Molk; from the website sacred-texts.com
112. Long Life Prayers for H.H. The Dalai Lama, and For All of the Great Lamas in the World Today; the first, traditional, the second, source unknown

Part V. Dedication Prayers

113. From Milarepa; from *The Dhammapada*, translated by P. Lal; Noonday Press, 1964

114. By His Holiness the Dalai Lama, after Shantideva, from 'The Direct and Unmistaken Method', Wisdom Publications

115. *Words of Truth*, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

116. *The Door of Happiness – Prayer for the Happiness of All Sentient Beings*, by Ngor Kunga Zangpo

117. *A Selection of Dedication Prayers from Lama Zopa Rinpoche*, FPMT

118. From *The Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, by Shantideva, Stephen Batchelor translation; Library of Tibetan Works and Archives

119. Dedication Prayers from the commentary on the White Tara Sadhana, by Geshe Wangdu, and from the White Tara Sadhana, previously unpublished

120. *Prayer for the Doctrine to Flourish*, from *The Sublime Path of the Victorious Ones*; Library of Tibetan Works and Archives

121. *Prayer for Buddha's Teachings to Flow Throughout the Length and Breadth of the West*, by Longdzin Ling Rinpoche, translated by Alex Berzin

Recommended reading

The reason for the following extended recommended reading list

With the decline of both chain and independent bookstores, most of us are left buying books almost exclusively online. Websites can produce computer generated suggestions but these cannot take the place of finding a book we didn't know we were looking for (and didn't know existed) in a bookstore. Nor can it take the place of an informed person, either a friend, or a kind and knowledgeable stranger recommending a book they have read and benefitted from.

The online market will only care about things that have sold before, and so have the potential to sell again. It is a soul-less process, more or less. There is very little knowledge behind it, and little human feeling or responsiveness, but like it or not, this is the way it is going, and will continue to go for some time.

Online markets (such as Amazon) will only deal in, or refer to books they know about. For this reason, and in order to do something to counter the loss of available information that the contraction of the book market represents, I think it's very important for people with knowledge in any area to make recommended reading lists, for those who would otherwise not encounter many of the best titles in any given subject. By offering a book list, there will at least be a greater chance that excellent titles will be sought out, and will remain available for generations to come.

That said, here is my extended recommended reading list in Buddhist studies:

Sutras

A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, translated by Stephen Batchelor for chapters 1 through 8, and, translated by the Padmakara Translation Committee for chapter 9

The Dhammapada, P. Lal translation

The Prajna Paramita Sutra, in Eight Thousand Lines, translated by Edward Conze

The Platform Sutra (also called ‘The Sutra of the Sixth Zen Patriarch’, or ‘The Sutra of Hui-Neng’) translated by Wong Mou-Lam and A.F. Price

The Uttara Tantra – A Treatise on Buddha Nature; Attributed to Maitreya; translated by Ken and Katia Holmes

The Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra – translated by Charles Luk

An Anthology of Buddhist Prayer, edited by Jason Espada

Theravada Buddhism

Living Buddhist Masters (also published as Living Dharma), edited by Jack Kornfeld

Ajaan Chah: A Taste of Freedom; Food for the Heart; A Still Forest Pool;

Ajaan Lee: Keeping the Breath in Mind; Inner Strength

Bhikkhu Visuddhacara: Curbing Anger, Spreading Love

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu: The Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree

Shaila Catherine: Focused and Fearless; Wisdom Wide and Deep

Henepola Gunaratana: Mindfulness in Plain English; Beyond Mindfulness in Plain English

Joseph Goldstein: One Dharma; Seeking the Heart of Wisdom (with Jack Kornfeld); The Experience of Insight

Khantipalo Bhikkhu: Calm and Clear

Sayadaw U Pandita: In This Very Life; The State of Mind Called Beautiful

Sharon Salzberg: Loving kindness

Venerable Sujiva: Loving Kindness

Venerable Weragoda Serada Maha Thero - Treasury of Truth -
A Commentary on the Dhammapada

Thich Nhat Hanh: Breathe!, You Are Alive! (also published at 'The Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing'); The Miracle of Mindfulness; The Heart of Understanding; The Diamond that Cuts Through Illusion; Interbeing; Being Peace; Transformation and Healing; A Guide to Walking Meditation; The Energy of Prayer; For A Future to Be Possible; The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching

Zen Buddhism

Shikantaza - An Introduction to Zen, Shohaku Okamura, editor

Shodo Harada Roshi: The Path to Bodhidharma; Morning Dewdrops of the Mind

Seikan Hasegawa: Cave of Poison Grass

The Tiger's Cave - edited by Trevor Leggett

D.T. Suzuki: Essays in Zen Buddhism

Suzuki Roshi: Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind

Uchiyama Roshi: Opening the Hand of Thought; How to Cook Your Life – From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment

Thich Thien-An: Zen Philosophy, Zen Practice

Tibetan Buddhism

Teachings from Tibet: Guidance from Great Lamas, edited by Nicholas Ribush

Teachings of Tibetan Yoga, translated by Garma C.C. Chang

The Sublime Path of the Victorious Ones; A Book of Mahayana Prayers

Ani Tenzin Palmo: Reflections On A Mountain Lake; Into the Heart of Life

Bokar Rinpoche: Meditation: Advice to Beginners

Chagdud Tulku: Gates to Buddhist Practice; Lord of the Dance

Death and Dying in the Tibetan Tradition: introduced and translated by Glenn Mullin

Deshung Rinpoche: The Three Levels of Spiritual Perception

Dilgo Khyentse: The Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones;
The Heart of Compassion

Gen Lamrimpa: Calming the mind (also published as 'Samatha Meditation)

Geshe Wangyal: The Door of Liberation

His Holiness The Fourteenth Dalai Lama: The Way to Freedom; Becoming Enlightened; The Mind in Comfort and Ease; For the Benefit of All Beings - A Commentary on the Way of the Bodhisattva; The Meaning of Life from A Buddhist Perspective; Advice on Dying and Living a Better Life

Kathleen Macdonald: How to Meditate

Kenpo Kathar: Dharma Paths

Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche: Opening the Door to Inconceivable Wisdom and Compassion; and, Opening to Our Primordial Nature; Ceaseless Echoes of the Great Silence; Discovering Infinite Freedom; Lion's Gaze; Prajana Paramita - The Six Perfections

Lama Lodro Rinpoche: The Quintessence of the Animate and Inanimate; Bardo Teachings

Lama Yeshe: Wisdom Energy I and II; The Essence of Tibetan Buddhism; Make Your Mind an Ocean; Becoming Your Own Therapist; The Peaceful Stillness of the Silent Mind; Life, Death, and After Death; Freedom Through Understanding;; Ego, Attachment, and Liberation; Silent Mind, Holy Mind

Lama Zopa Rinpoche: The Door to Satisfaction; Transforming Problems into Happiness; Virtue and Reality; The Joy of Compassion; Making Life Meaningful; How Things Exist - Teachings on Emptiness; Kadampa Teachings; The Heart of the Path; Heart Sutra Practices and Instructions for Retreat; Heart Advice - The Bodhisattva Attitude

Matthieu Ricard: The Monk and the Philosopher; Why Meditate? – Working with Thoughts and Emotions; Happiness - A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill

Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche: Natural Great Perfection; Rest in Natural Great Peace

Pabonkha Rinpoche: Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand; with Lama Zopa Rinpoche: Heart Advice for Retreat

Robert Thurman: Infinite Life; The Jewel Tree of Tibet

Sogyal Rinpoche: The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying

Tenzin Wangal Rinpoche: The Five Elements in Tibetan Shamanism, Tantra, and Dzongchen

The Seventh Dalai Lama: Songs of Spiritual Change, translated by Glenn Mullin

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama: The Path of the Bodhisattva Warrior

Tulku Urgyen: Rainbow Painting; Repeating the Words of the Buddha; As It Is, volumes I and II

On The Seven Point Mind Training teachings:

Geshe Rabten: Advice From A Spiritual Friend

Dilgo Khyentse: Enlightened Compassion

Jamgon Kongtrul: The Great Path of Awakening – A Commentary on the Seven-Point Mind Training

On the transition between the Middle Way View, and Buddha Nature teachings

Nagarjuna: In Praise of the Dharmadatu, with a commentary by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso

Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche: Opening the Wisdom Door of the Rangtong and Shentong Views: A Brief Explanation of the One Taste of the Second and Third Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma

On Vajrayana:

Lama Yeshe: An Introduction to Tantra;

Dilgo Khyentse: Pure Appearance

Gyatrul Rinpoche: Generating the Deity

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama: Tantra in Tibet; Deity Yoga; Yoga Tantra

Jamgon Kongtrul: Creation and Completion (with a commentary by Thrangu Rinpoche)

Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche: Opening the Wisdom Door of the Outer Tantras

On particular practices:

Bokar Rinpoche: Chenrezig, Lord of Love

Tulku Thondup: The Healing Power of Loving Kindness

Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche: Tara's Enlightened Activity

Lama Yeshe: Becoming the Compassion Buddha; Becoming Vajrasattva; Universal Love - The Yoga Method of Buddha Maitreya

On healing practices:

Jason Espada: A Collection of Buddhist Healing Prayers and Practices

Khenpo Kathar Rinpoche: White Tara - the Wish Fulfilling Wheel

Lama Zopa Rinpoche: Ultimate Healing; Teachings from the Medicine Buddha Retreat

Thrangu Rinpoche: Medicine Buddha Teachings

Tulku Thondup: The Healing Power of the Mind; Boundless Healing

Venerable Hsuan Hua: The Medicine Master Sutra, with commentary