

The Uncommon preliminaries to enter Tantra – Ngöndros practices

Vajrasattva

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Introduction to the Ngöndros practice

In order for us to get opportunity to learn and practice Tantra, we need first to receive the initiation. **The initiation is the doorway.**

In order to receive the initiation, there are **two preliminary practices required: the common and uncommon preliminaries.**

First of all, the definition of Ngöndro: “Ngön” means “before” and “dro” means “go” or “actualized” or “practiced”, so “go before”, or “preliminary practices” to prepare to the main practice of Tantra, to make it a genuine Dharma practice, a genuine path leading to liberation and enlightenment.

The common preliminary is **the preliminary cultivation of practices to the main body practice of the three capable beings’ path, as well as the main body practice of the four classes of the Tantra practices.**

The uncommon preliminary is **mainly the preliminary practices to be accomplished before you conduct the main practice of the four classes of Tantra.**

It is absolutely essential to conduct the Ngöndros **before we engage in the Highest Yoga Tantra practices where we practice the essence of Tantra: the practice of the generation and completion stages of the path.**

Without the Ngöndro, we can encounter obstacles to receive the blessings of the practice, **because the basis of the person is not prepared to be a good container in order to sustain such a precious nectar.**

The practice can be thus side-tracked or have flaws, leakages and become worldly Dharma, resulting in the virtue generated not being the causes and conditions for liberation and full enlightenment (and instead becoming causes for samsara).

To practice the two stages of the tantric path, we need to have a pure vessel whose negativities and obscurations, defilements, would have been purified, especially the gross obstacles of the ripening of the past negative karma and negative karmic imprints.

We also need **stores of merits to digest such a sacred and profound blessed Dharma like the realizations we achieve through the generation and completion stages.**

The preliminary practices **prepare us to be good containers.**

I. The common and uncommon preliminaries

A. The common preparatory practice

The common preparatory practice serves us to have a **good understanding and a certain level of real habitual experience of the Lam-Rim’s three principal aspects of the path.**

- **Without renunciation**, even as powerful as tantric practices can be, the Tantra **cannot be turn into a path.**
- **Without Bodhicitta**, Tantra **cannot be actualized as a cause for enlightenment.**
- **Without the emptiness wisdom**, you cannot use the front-generation of the deity, the self-generation of the deity, the body mandala, all the rest of profound Yogas, especially

the generation and completion stages of the tantric practice. They **cannot be utilized** if we do not have a solid understanding on emptiness.

So, studying Lam-Rim is in fact actualizing the common preparatory practice for us to be qualified to enter tantric practices.

There are **four main common preliminaries: understanding and reflecting on the meaning of the four thoughts that shift the direction of our spiritual practice to a purest practice of the Dharma:**

- **Precious Human Rebirth**
- **Death and impermanence**
- **Karmic law causes and effects**
- **Flaws and limitations of the Samsara.**

Those four Ngöndros are meant to make our main Dharma practice (whichever Yana or capable beings' path we want to practice) more successful in actualizing realizations on the path. **The firmer is your understanding and reflection on those topics and the more successful your practice will be in generating unbreakable, irresistible, spontaneous realizations** on the path.

By the power of motivation and dedications infused by altruism, any practice will become the direct cause for liberation and full enlightenment.

For example, we will get total and absolute confidence in our ability to achieve enlightenment within this very lifetime if we do take the full essence of this precious human rebirth, without being distracted and from now on, only focusing on practicing the Dharma, as death can happen anytime.

By applying the deep wisdom of the karmic law on causes and effects, then you will assure yourself not to waste any second of your time in generating even the slightest negativities, in only accumulating virtues, and constantly purifying any false.

For example, thinking that as long as I am not killing human being (bigger picture), I can allow myself to kill mosquitos. Unknowingly ignoring the law of how karma increases, multiplies and can never be washed away without experiencing the results, we may commit abundance of negative karma just because of lacking those foundational realizations.

Then, because generating a genuine sense of renunciation is the only way to make any virtue a cause for liberation, we must understand truly and deeply the false of karma and delusions; and renounce the six realms. Even Highest Yoga Tantric practices cannot become a cause for enlightenment without that.

Even when we label our practice as an altruistic practice, it will be just a label without that genuine sense of renunciation. It cannot be a genuine Dharma.

Therefore, we must practice those common preliminaries meditations daily and infuse our daily practices with them. We must nurture and prepare ourselves with them. Then, each and every practice become so solid.

The conclusion is **based on understanding the limitation of karma and delusions, and samsara**, we will make sure that whatever practice we are doing from now on become only Dharma practice, whatever action of our body, speech and mind become only Dharma.

We come to the point of not only seeing our capability in practicing Dharma, but also practicing Dharma now, and only Dharma. All that for the purpose of achieving full enlightenment to benefit all beings (higher scope) in one lifetime (Tantra).

The quality of our renunciation will define the level of your main body practice.

That preliminary should be taken as a basis to any form of Dharma practice, meditation, retreat, puja, guru yoga, the basis of the relationship with your Guru, the motivation to take more vows...everything; to readjust our system each time and avoid any leakage or flaws.

During the whole year before conducting the next Ngöndro, this common practice should also accompany us every day to make our practice the purest practice and most efficient on the path to enlightenment.

B. The uncommon preparatory practice

In the same way, the quality of the actual practice will be defined by the quality of the Ngöndro. This is so so important.

Even though the different traditions of Tibetan Buddhism have a different number of Ngöndros and different emphasizes, there are generally four mains uncommon Ngöndros. “Uncommon” within the two schools of the Mahayana: Mahayana Sutrayana and Mahayana Tantrayana. This is “uncommon” to the Tantrayana.

Even though the different traditions of Tibetan Buddhism have a different number of Ngöndros and different emphasizes, there are generally four mains uncommon Ngöndros.

In order **to make ourselves a suitable vessel** for the Dharma and get realizations on the path, there is the **Refuge and Bodhicitta to plan the seeds of enlightenment within our continuum.**

Then, in order **to clear obstacles** to be able to enter the path, to clear obstacles on the way once you are on the path and actualize the results; you have the practice of **Vajrasattva.**

Then, in order **to accumulate conducive causes and conditions** to enter into the path, and have a successful journey, you engage in the Ngöndro of **mandala offerings.** It is the practice our lineage use, like Lama Tsongkhapa.

Then, in order **to receive the blessings** of the path and the practice, to actualize realizations, then, you do the Ngöndro of **Guru Yoga practice.** The Guru is the creator of everything on our path to enlightenment and the ultimate objective, to actualize Guruhood.

Now if you want to practice Mother Tantra, there will be even one more layer of Ngöndro: to receive a Father initiation. There is the common, uncommon, maybe we should label it as innermost uncommon preliminary practice. But if you are already practicing Father Tantra, then, there is no need.

Among the people joining the retreat, you may already have your meditational deity. In case you do not have, **from my side, my motivation is to lead you to Mother Tantra.**

I feel it is my responsibility since I chose to face students and teach the Dharma (it is also the instructions of my Gurus), therefore I need to be responsible, that is how the decision came that it was time to move on and engage in serious Ngöndros practices and retreats.

II. Vajrasattva retreat

In order to purify and actualize the pure vessel to receive the tantric blessing, you engage in 100.000 Vajrasattva retreat with the hundred syllables Vajrasattva mantra:

*OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / VAJRASATTVA TVENOPATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME
BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA / SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA
SIDDHIM ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SU CHAME / CHITTAM SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA
HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA MAME MUNCHA / VAJRA BHAVA MAHA
SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHAT.*

A. Extra requirement

Unlikely to the Refuge practice, you need some extra requirements. **In order to conduct the Vajrasattva retreat, you need to receive Vajrasattva empowerment:** the Father-Mother initiation, the Father initiation, the Jenang would do too: the blessing initiation.

If you do not have any other great initiation and just have the Jenang initiation, during the retreat, you will not be able to do the self-generation part of the sadhana during the retreat. You will have to **visualize Vajrasattva in the space in front of you or on top of your crown. Self-generating yourself as the deity will not be possible.**

But **if you have any great initiation of Highest Yoga Tantra then on top of that you have Vajrasattva Jenang**, when you do the sadhana you can do the self-generation as part of the practice.

The commitment after receiving Geshela's initiation is:

- **Daily commitment: a minimum of 21 recitations of either the short or the long mantra,**
- **Commitment retreat (for both strict and open retreat): 100.000 of the 100 syllables mantra (+10.000).**

B. Finding a good retreat place (preconditions for the place to be conducive) and setting up the boundaries

You need to find a good conducive retreat place: you can go to caves, monasteries, retreat huts, even your own house, as long as you have a retreat prayer room and the respect of your family (no interruption). Once you are in your cushion, you cannot interrupt the session.

Any place can be conducive.

Best if you can gather the six preconditions for meditative serenity mentioned in Lam Rim for Shamata practice (can be applied to any kind of retreat):

1. An appropriate place:
 - Easy access (easy to get food and clothing)
 - peaceful (humans, animals, elements, where landlords, Nagas, spirits are not disturbed by any human activities like mining, pure ground: no killing sexual misconduct, butchery, production of weapons...) or where past retreatants practiced there: the places carry the spiritual power of past realizations or holy places (if not by performing the six preparatory practices you can consecrate any other place)
 - good place that does not bring sickness
 - with ethical and like-minded companions around

- not too crowded and quiet
- 2. having little desire (not craving any external conditions)
- 3. being content
- 4. completely giving up many activities
- 5. pure ethical discipline
- 6. completely get rid of thoughts of desire.

You need then **to set the boundaries of the retreat**. It could be just within the four walls of your room, or the whole compound, the whole mountain, it is up to you. There is the retreat boundary to whom you are going to interact with and the boundary of the landmark: how much land you are going to cross.

As far as the landmark boundary is concerned, try to make it as big as possible. But during the retreat, try to stay in a small area, try not to go outside of your room. But in case of emergency, if you need to go to the doctor, you should include it in your boundary. This way you will not break the retreat.

About the people you can interact with, try to include as many people as possible. You must include your doctor, a few attendants, your family members, your teachers, a few Dharma brothers and sisters, who can assist you. **Try to limit the exposing of your body, speech and even your thinking** of those outside the boundaries, specifically about worldly concerns.

Also do not let them see your body and hear your voice. Because if they do, **that create obstacles in the Samaya**. If you see them, same thing.

But you need to be prepared, if you are not ready with that kind of environment you will get lunged. You will have health problem.

Now, even if you are doing a Ngöndro retreat, **most of us already are doing deity yoga**. So, then, you open the curtains, the window, you do not worry about the sound, especially if you are doing it at your home with your family around...

Utilize the deity yoga practice: whatever you hear is deity sound, whatever you see is Daka, Dakini, the mandala. Whatever thought arises, do not even worry about it, regard them as deity thoughts. **That will help to secure the Samaya.**

That is why when you do the chanting or recitation, you go to more isolated places, so you can secure the samaya, of the mantra, of the energy. **Try to really consecrate the entirety of your body, speech and mind.**

C. Prepare the place and your mind (Blessing the cushion + 6 preparatory practices/7 Limbs practice + 9 rounds of breathing meditation)

Then, **do some preliminaries to the preliminary retreat: setting up the altar**, if you have the facilities. If not, then on a proper area, on a table, you put the picture of your Guru, the refuge field.

As far as the offerings are concerned, for this retreat, there is no front generation or self-generation. Therefore, whatever offerings is fine: 7 water bowls offering, one water bowl offering, one or hundred lights, or abundance of flowers and fruits. You can make a general tormas as an offering to the Buddha.

Prepare the retreat cushion: draw a svastika on the floor or on paper. On top of that, you put one kusha grass with the hair facing behind. On top of that, you put one long-life grass in the same direction, as the kusha grass, the grass with a lot of nodes. Usually, you can find some everywhere.

The svastika represents the auspiciousness to actualize the realizations on the path, including enlightenment. The kusha grass is to clear mishaps, impurities, pollution. The long-life grass is to be able to sustain health and enough life span to achieve all the intended realizations on the path.

For deity yoga, all that is a must. For Ngöndro, in the West, if really you cannot get kusha grass in the city, then, it is ok. You take whatever you have. Otherwise, it is beneficial to have it.

Then, place the cushion: try to find something stable. That is why in the Himalaya, you try to make a box, with just enough space for your knees and buttock, this way it is fixed. Before the retreat you need to **bleed the cushion**, that is why you need something stable that will not move until the end of the retreat and stay there fixed. It is the auspiciousness of immovable.

But in case, it moves at some point, no need to worry.

Then, if there is anybody who is familiar with the blessings of the cushion ritual, invite that person so he can bless you, the retreat and mainly bless your cushion.

If not, **you can bleed it by yourself** if you do not find anybody to do the ritual. Then you hold the vajra with your right hand at your heart, and the bell with your left hand at the level of your navel.

Hold the bell with your thumb, your index finger (on the top of the bell to stabilize it) and middle finger, with the curved part of the bell towards you. And hold the vajra with the part of the hand that is between your thumb and index finger, with the tip of your thumb touching the tip of your index finger.

Touch your cushion with the vajra and you can touch the ground with your fingers tips and say:

Om Vajra Bhumi Ha Hum

(like at the beginning of the long mandala offering).

Then, think your seat is blessed, it has actualized the vajra ground, it will support you all the way until you actualize enlightenment. You can use that for any kind of retreat: Lam-Rim, Lojong, anything.

Conduct the rest of the six preparatory practices (for an extensive most useful and meaningful explanation cf. tenzinzopa.com/ebook/ebook/gurudevotion.pdf, page 75) **to prepare and consecrate the place and your practice.**

To be conducted before every session to make it even more conducive, meritorious and pure):

1. Make the place clean, comfortable and setting up the altar

With the motivation of cleaning the inner dirt: when you do the cleaning, whether you are using the brush or vacuuming, moping, you recite “Drul Pang Tima Pang”. A monk achieved Arhatship just by doing that first preparatory practice while cleaning the Monastery environment.

Then, you arrange the altar:

- in the middle you arrange the Buddha statue or picture (representation of the holy body)

- on the right side of the Buddha's hand, towards you (from your side, when you look at it is your left side, you arrange the scripture (representation of the holy speech)
- on the left side, the stupa (holy mind)
- in front, you arrange the offerings
- Guru's picture goes always higher
- if you have a deity picture: at the right of the Buddha's hand, same side than the scripture, you arrange the Highest Yoga Tantra deity first, then Yoga Tantra deities, then Kriya Tantra deities, then Action Tantra deities
- you arrange the Father Tantra deities at the right side, and the Mother Tantra at the left
- you can arrange the Dharma protectors behind the Gurus and Buddhas images, or at the end of the two series of deities, or on a separate shrine
- you can cover the Dharma protectors with five-colors clothes, or arrange them in a box to not expose them to the public or the family
- you would do the same with the Highest Yoga Tantra deities.

2. Extensive offerings

If you are a deity yoga practitioner, then it is good to always have two sets of eight offerings (best) for the self-generation and the front generation:

- for the front generation, referring to the offering for the Merit field, from the Buddha's right side, starting with water, water, flower, incense, light, perfume, music, food.
- for self-generation: from your right side, at the opposite: water, water, flower, incense, light, perfume, music, food
- there are no limits: you can arrange more sets
- you can also offer 8 water bowls offering symbolizing the 8 offerings
- or 7 water bowls offering, which represent the 7 pure water resources, or the 7 qualities of pure water (Tibet).
- if you can afford ("honestly acquired"), you offer in a container made with precious gems, the five precious gems: gold, silver, copper, brass crystal, rubies, topaz, then it becomes also an offering of precious jewel

3. Right meditation posture

Vairochana's posture is the best. You can use the half posture, like Mother Tara's sitting, or Maitreya sitting posture on a chair, or whatever is comfortable.

4. Visualization of the Merits field

Visualize the Lam-Rim/Lama Chöpa merit field:

- at the center is your Root Guru,
- then the Lineage of the Vast Conduct, referring to Serlingpa, Asanga, Maitreya
- then the Lineage of the Profound View: Shantideva, Nagarjuna, Manjushri
- then, the countless Buddhas of the three times
- then, the Arya beings of the Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, the Bodhisattvas, ordinary Bodhisattvas, Aryas Bodhisattvas, Hearers and Solitary Realizers along with those dwelling in the Buddha's words: which is referring to the Dharma protectors, who obey the Buddha's instructions to protect the Dharma and the practitioners.

You can do the visualization in three ways: visualizing one by one, or like the view of a bird, or just your Root Guru who is the essence of all.

5. 7 Limbs practice: to purify obstacles to meditation and accumulation of merits, meritorious resources to the success of the meditation

- Limb of Prostrations :

When you do prostrations, each gesture has a special meaning. First you join your two hands putting your thumbs inside your palms (not with flat hands): the right hand being the method aspect of the path, the Bodhicitta, love, compassion, and the left hand, the wisdom of selflessness, of emptiness. Together, they represent the union of wisdom and methods to perform powerful practice of veneration and purification.

Then, you place your hands on the center of the crown, to purify all the limitations to actualize the major and minor marks of the Buddha, especially the Ushnisha, Buddha's crown, one of the marks of the Buddha. Then, you place on the forehead, to purify whatever negativities you accumulated physically and accumulate all the causes to actualize Buddha's holy body. Then, you place them on the throat to purify all the negativities accumulated through your speech, to accumulate all the causes to actualize Buddha's meritorious sound and speech. Then, the last one, placed at the heart purifies all the negativities accumulated through your heart and then accumulate all the causes to achieve Buddha's omniscient enlightened mind.

After that, you gradually lie down on the ground, flat. The texts emphasize going down like a big tree, in slow motion. Your feet should be together side by side.

The more space you cover around you with your gestures, the more ground you cover with your body, not only the surface, but the space beneath also all the way down to the final grounds, the better. Touch the ground with your palms and stretch your fingers.

The number of dusts you cover is the number of merits you create to achieve the higher beneficial body of the Dharma Kings, or the Kings of the 33 Gods. That will be the number of reincarnations you will obtain as a Wheel turning King, which is so beneficial. You will also be reborn as a deva or a human, a son or daughter of the Gods.

Then, once on the ground, gather your arms in a vast gesture, before stretching your arms ahead and put them again at your crown. Then, stretch and expand them again around your body to pull you back on foot. You should not remain too long on the ground.

Then, there are short prostrations called prostrations of Five Limbs: forehead, palms and knees. You do not have to lie down. You can also just join the palms of your hands at the level of your heart, or even with just one hand at your heart, with the thumb inside.

That was physical prostration.

Now, you associate the gesture with verbal prostration by offering praises (Lama Kyab su chhi o, 35 Buddhas, Vajrasattva...). For mental prostration: you see the Guru as Buddha and generate faith and veneration.

You can also visualize you are leading all the rest of the sentient beings in doing prostrations.

- Limb of Offerings

Lama Tsongkhapa keeps on quoting the King of Prayers Sutra:

I offer these buddhas and bodhisattvas fabulous flowers, glorious garlands, cymbals, scented balm, precious parasols, excellent butter lamps, and superb incense. I offer these buddhas and bodhisattvas' sublime garments, supreme scents, sachets of fragrant powder equal to Mount Meru, and every wonderful thing in a splendid array.

Unsurpassable offerings are set forth in the stanza:

May all these unsurpassable and vast offerings appear before all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Be creative, the bigger the visualization accompanying the actual offerings the better (cf. Geshela's extensive commentary, In the footsteps of the Guru mentioned earlier tenzinzopa.com/ebook/ebook/gurudevotion.pdf).

- Limb of Confession

By combining the purification and accumulation of merits of the Seven Limbs practices, eventually, we will actualize the complete purified state of our being, which is Buddha's form body and Buddha's wisdom body.

Every limitation needs to be confessed.

- Limb of Rejoicing

Rejoice in all the merit of all the buddhas of the ten directions, bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, those with more to learn, those with no more to learn, and all ordinary beings.

If you want to practice just one thing, practice rejoicing. It is one of the best ways to keep our minds happy: day to day, our heart filled with happiness, positivity. The benefit out of it is supreme. That is why Shantideva made a statement: "rejoicing is the greatest virtue, among all the virtues"

When you rejoice in the merits of the Buddhas, you accumulate 1 of the ten of their merits. Then, rejoicing in the merits of the Guru, I think it would be even more, or maybe equal to rejoicing in the merits of the Buddhas. Rejoicing in anyone's merits during a solar eclipse multiply hundred million times. Then, rejoicing during a lunar eclipse multiplies the merits seven hundred thousand times.

- Limb of Requesting to Turn the Wheel of Dharma

We should practice it all the time. That way we will never experience the poverty of receiving Dharma nectar.

And you will see every action, all the deeds of the Guru, as teaching thanks to this practice. And whenever you read the text, you will see every letter, every word as a teaching. Then, whenever you need instructions or advice, you timely receive them.

If we do not have the merits through this Limb of practice, no matter how many teachings you receive, you do not hear the instructions, you do not hear the Dharma teachings, you hear something else. Even if you learn the teachings, and train in it, you never realize the path.

Sometimes just to expand or express your sincerity in requesting Dharma teachings wholeheartedly, not only voicing out to request the teaching, but you can also visualize yourself in numerous forms and then in one voice wholeheartedly, sincerely, respectfully requesting them.

- Limb of Supplication

When you request the Gurus not to pass into Parinirvana, you can do it in many different ways: Long-life Pujas, mandala offerings, fulfilling the Guru's wishes; most of all, keeping pure Samaya in relation to the Guru, then practicing the Guru's advice. Then the Guru will live with us for a long time.

In case the Guru sees the necessity of showing the teaching of impermanence and death to the disciple, then, the manifestation of the Guru will manifest swiftly for us to continue to enjoy the Dharma.

You can also dedicate Long-life Retreat, like Amitayus Retreat, Namgyalma Retreat, White Tara Retreat, or daily recitation of White Tara practice in the name of the Guru to fulfill the Limb of the Supplication. Then, we do that also to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Deities, Dharma protectors, for their blessings to always be closed to us.

- Limb of Dedication

Dedication is as equally important as motivation because it fulfills the three purposes (Lama Tsongkhapa):

(1) accumulating, (2) purifying, and (3) multiplying and making inexhaustible.

By dedicating in Bodhicitta and Emptiness, if anger arises or any negativities, all the merits you have been accumulated and dedicated will not be destroyed and be forever remaining there. And not only by dedicating in altruism, Bodhicitta multiplies, since the dedication is done in the concern of numberless sentient beings, then your merits will be numberless, as equal as the number of sentient beings.

Then, no matter how tiny the merit, if you dedicate it in Bodhicitta, it will last until the last sentient being achieves Buddhahood. It will benefit from now until Samsara ends. It will never be exhausted and eventually it will turn into the inexhaustible merits of Buddhas' enlightened qualities: the perfected merit of wisdom and the perfected merit of method.

6. The last (6th) Preparatory Practice: The Request

Request not to pass into Parinirvana, to always turn the wheel of Dharma, to quickly grant the blessings, blessings of realizations, to clear obstacles, siddhis, purity of the practice...

In the FPMT Prayer book you can also find this verse if you practice Deity Yoga practice towards the Guru from whom you received initiations, Tantric vows, Bodhisattvas vows, you can conjoin this:

Special Request for the Three Great Purposes:

I prostrate and go for refuge to the guru and the Three Rare Sublime Ones.

Please bless my mind. Please bless me and all mother sentient beings to immediately cease all the wrong concepts from disrespect to the virtuous friend up to the subtle dual appearances of white appearance, red increase, and dark near attainment.

Please bless us to immediately generate all the right realizations from respect for the virtuous friend up to the unification of no-more-learning.

Please bless us to immediately pacify all outer and inner obstacles. (3x)

At the end, if you know the Guru's name mantra you can recite it 21 times or one mala. Then, you can visualize the Guru absorbing into your heart, cf. detailed explanation of the visualization in the next section dedicated to the prayers in relation to the Guru III.C. Prayers to receive the blessings of the four initiations or empowerments, In the footsteps of the Guru, ebook mentioned earlier tenzinzopa.com/ebook/ebook/gurudevotion.pdf).

Make a few rounds of the 9 rounds of breathing meditation (for a detailed explanation on how to conduct it and the visualization to make it a purification practice cf. vajracuttersutra.pdf page 13) to set up your mind in the session and the practice.

D. Extra implements

Then, during the retreat, **you need to have Vajrasattva Torma offering for the front generation, the ritual offering, and you need to set up proper eight offerings.** There is a retreat guide textbook for Vajrasattva, you can refer to that.

If there is any sanghas, you can refer to them. If you do not have access to that kind of help: then you can put some biscuits, chocolates, even just one package of biscuits, as long as there is no alcohol or meat, and the substances used for the biscuits are just sugar and flour. Since, the retreat will take about 2 or 3 months, no need to open the package.

You put it on a nice container or a plate in front of Vajrasattva picture in the center. Put the eight offerings in front, from right to left: argham, padyam, pushpe, dhupe, aloke, gandhe, naividya, shapta. Then, around or even in the container, for accumulation of merits, you can add more offerings.

You will also need a vajra, a bell and a damaru you will use when you do the sadhana, during the section of making offerings.

E. Preliminary prayers

The preliminary practice to the Vajrasattva practice is the same than the one indicated for the Refuge and Bodhicitta Ngöndro practice.

After the preliminary practices, you start the retreat with some preliminary prayers and establish a Bodhicitta motivation: **Refuge and Bodhicitta prayers, Invocation four lines prayer, Samanthabadra's offering prayer to accumulate merits for the success of the retreat.**

Usually, you would have vajra, bell, and saffron water as well in the vase. **You can ring the bell while doing the invocation. Sprinkling the water to bless the offerings.**

If you do not have a vase, a glass of pure water will do. You can have a singing bowl if you do not have a proper dorje and bell. No worries if really you do not have any of that.

For the texts of the prayers and description of the visualization cf. Part V of this booklet.

1. Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta

Cf. prayer in part V

2. Four Immeasurable Prayer

Cf. prayer in part V

3. Invocation Prayer

Cf.prayer in part V

4. **Actual Visualization on Lama Tsongkhapa**

Cf.description in part V

5. **Seven-Limb Prayer**

Cf.prayer in part V

6. **Mandala Offering**

Cf.prayer in part V

7. **Requesting Blessings**

Cf.prayer in part V

8. **Glimpse Meditation on Lamrim topic**

Cf.prayer in part V

You can insert any Lamrim topic to meditate on at this point.

You can use the Foundation of All Good Qualities as a support: recite each day one verse and reflect on its meaning.

F. **Vajrasattva practice**

After setting up the basis of Refuge, Bodhicitta, and the other preliminaries prayers, comes the visualization part of the sadhana, which is one of the important elements here; in particular, the visualization of the purification practice with the front-generation of Vajrasattva.

1. **Understanding the visualizations of the sadhana**

a. **Guru Yoga: Guru Vajrasattva being one with your Root guru and all the lineage Gurus**

One of the most important things to understand about the **front-generation**, about visualizing Vajrasattva, either in front of you, or on top of your head, is that **the deity is a recognition of your Root Guru and embodiment of all the lineage Gurus**. That is regarded as a very important factor in order to receive the blessings most effectively.

Guru is the actual embodiment of all the Buddhas in Guru Vajrasattva form. Guru Vajrasattva is in nature the form of the Sambhogakaya aspect of the Guru, and the Vajrasattva image: but with your knowing of that Vajrasattva is in absolute your root Guru.

Guru being the nearest channeling factor of the blessings, when you do the purification visualizations, the purification takes effect more easily, more effectively. In other words, whenever you relate to Guru Vajrasattva, **you actualize Guru Yoga practice in relation to Guru Vajrasattva, which plays the most effective role and basis to receive the blessings and actualize all the benefits: planting the seeds to achieve Vajrasattvahood.**

The Guru Yoga of Vajrasattva practice is recognizing Guru Vajrasattva in your precious Guru. That understanding, that recognition, that conviction is the Guru Yoga practice.

b. **The ultimate Guru: the union of great bliss and emptiness**

Another important point is recognizing Guru Vajrasattva as **the ultimate Guru which is the union of great bliss and emptiness.**

There is also the **symbolism of the Vajrasattva image:** that is the general understanding the colors, the postures, the symbolism of Vajra and Bell. If you are visualizing the Father and Mother, then the symbolism of the two.

Vajrasattva comes in a complete white color form. If it is Father and Mother, then they embrace together: Father Vajrasattva embraces as the method aspect of the vajra position, then the Mother Vajrasattva embraces in the aspect of the lotus position, which symbolized wisdom.

Then, **Father and Mother embracing together, there is a symbolism of the union of great bliss and emptiness, or method and wisdom.** Having all this understanding in your heart has **its own benefit of purification and accumulation of the imprints to actualize Guru Vajrasattvahood.**

The implements they hold are the Vajra and Bell. The definite Vajra (NB: the interpretive Vajra is the Vajra they hold) is the symbolism of great bliss, or Bodhicitta. The definite meaning of the bell is the wisdom of emptiness (NB: similarly, the interpretive or conventional Bell is the Bell they hold). In Tibetan, Dorje Sempa means, hold or embrace or engage in the Vajra.

When you visualize Vajrasattva, you **also visualize the completeness of the entire Vajrasattva mandala and its deities.** There are three ways to visualize:

- Lama Chopa: very pervasive elaborate merit field way of visualization. You view them as “bird view”: a complete view of the entire city as a bird would do.
- Yamantaka sadhana way of visualization: one above another, all the mandala deities are piled up from your crown.
- Kundun Norbu Lu: one single deity, Guru Vajrasattva, who is the recognition of your Root Guru. It is the easiest and also regarded as the most effective.

People, when they do preliminary practice, they chose the Kundun Norbu Lu: one Vajrasattva who is the embodiment of all the deities of the mandala and also the lineage Gurus.

When you visualize, you visualize **the three substances:** the lotus, moon disc and the syllable HUM.

Usually, on the common path, they represent the three principal aspects of the path: renunciation, Bodhicitta and emptiness. **In the uncommon path, they symbolize clear-light, illusory body and the accomplishment of the union completion stage.**

From those three bases of the arising of Guru Vajrasattva is your Lama. You do the visualization with that understanding and recognition.

Now, you can visualize on top of your crown and in front of you. **There is a third way to visualize Vajrasattva: in your heart, in your central chakra.**

First, have the understanding or at least a reflection on the meaning of emptiness. From that emptiness there is an arising of an eight petals lotus. On top of that, there is a moon disc. On the center of the moon disc, there is the syllable HUM. From the syllable HUM miraculously appears an absolute complete aspect of Guru Vajrasattva, who is oneness with your Root Guru.

Understand Guru Vajrasattva is an illustration of the meaning of the common path, as well as the meaning of the uncommon path.

Then, if you are visualizing Father and Mother: the Mother is the absolute actualization of the cessation, the full liberation from the entire samsaric flaws; the Father who symbolizes the method, altruism, is the actualization of the complete stages of the enlightenment who even overcomes the nirvana peace.

In other words:

- whenever you think of **Mother Vajrasattva**: your ultimate goal is to achieve your resultant Vajrasattvahood **by purifying all the delusional obscurations to Nirvana**.
- when you think about **Father Vajrasattva**: your resultant Guru Vajrasattva is to be achieved **by eliminating all the obscurations to omniscience**.

During the following visualization (after you visualize the merits field or the object of your practice which is the front generated Guru Vajrasattva), while you are reciting the mantra, you do the practice focusing on the Mother Vajrasattva purifying all the delusions.

c. How to actualize the front generation or the self-generation (only when you have the Highest Yoga Tantric initiation for the second one)

You acknowledge the definition of the different delusions such as ignorant-grasping, self-cherishing attitude, etc. Then, see their false, their limitations. They are purified by the nectar flow and the light raises coming from Vajrasattva in a form of a dark smoke. **Then you achieve the state of the Guru Vajrasattva in the form of the Dakini, the wisdom aspect of Guru Vajrasattva.**

Then, during a certain time, you do the visualizations of the purification of the defilements, the tendencies of the delusions, which are **the obscurations to omniscience**, which are the negation from the ten Bhumis, from the eighth Bhumis onward, the obscuration that is a negation to the eighth Bhumis Bodhisattva, then ninth Bhumis Bodhisattva, then the tenth Bhumis Bodhisattva, all those being the most subtle aspects of the defilements.

You visualize they are purified in the form of dark smoke. After being purified from those, you actualize yourself as the resultant Guru Vajrasattva Father form.

In order to do that, it is good to know the meaning of the Father – Mother.

If you are just doing Father alone, then you can still see the union of both wisdom and method in the Father.

Now there is another way of understanding how you actualize the front generation or if you have the Highest Yoga Tantric great initiation how you actualize the self-generation.

These are the three rituals and the four vajras. Those are the basis where you actualize either the front-generation or the self-generation of the deity:

- **The first ritual**, you visualize a lotus and a moon disc and in the center of that the syllable HUM. This ritual represents the speech.
- **The second ritual** is when the lotus, moon disc and syllable HUM dissolve into light: from there appear a five-spoked vajra. In its center there is a white syllable HUM. It represents the heart.
- **The third ritual** is when the five-spoked vajra and the syllable HUM also merge into light. From there, the entire Guru Vajrasattva (either Father- Mother or just Father) miraculously arises from that light. That is the ritual in relation to the body.

Then the four Vajras:

- The first is emptiness:
- The second is the syllable
- The third one is the form
- The fourth one is the placing of the mantras

First, you meditate on emptiness to actualize the first Vajra. Then from that emptiness you actualize the lotus and moon disc and on top of that, you place a syllable HUM which arise as a Vajra. The Vajra merges into light. From there, the actual form of Guru Vajrasattva arises. Then once Vajrasattva arises, you place the syllable Om on the forehead, Ha at the level of the throat, then HUM at the heart chakra.

d. Visualization of the purification

From the visualized Guru Vajrasattva, infinite light raises and infinite nectar flows. **The first one is like a showering entering from the crown** and purifying the entire of your crown chakra and **whatever negativities accumulated from beginningless lifetimes in relation to your body is completely purified.**

It enters then your throat channel and visualize the light and nectar totally filling your throat chakra. **Whatever karma you committed from beginningless lifetimes in relation to your speech is purified.**

It enters your heart chakra and all the rest of the entire body and reach the rest of the consciousness and **purify any negative karma committed from beginningless lifetimes in relation to your heart is completely purified.**

Then, you understand **you actualize the complete seeds of Guru Vajrasattva's body, speech and mind to be able to manifest into the resultant Guru Vajrasattva within yourself**, your future Guru Vajrasattva, your future enlightenment.

You can do this visualization not only to yourself **but also to purify the rest of the sentient beings as well as the environment.** You visualize all the fathers-mothers sentient beings, all the objects of the three partial attitudes: your loved ones, the enemies, the strangers. The rest of the sentient beings sit around you.

Otherwise, you can also visualize on the right and left, all the loved ones, in front the enemies, then behind all the strangers and neutral beings. Or the entire numberless sentient beings in their own individual rebirth but in the aspect of human form like yourself and also carrying the human intelligence including faith, the conviction in the practice like you.

Then, **you as the leader of the practice, whenever you do a purification practice equally the rest of the sentient beings too receive the same way a similar benefit and purification. At the end, understand and visualize you have in fact actualize the actual stage of purification, which is the actual state of Guru Vajrasattva.**

The stronger the conviction, the stronger the purification takes place.

Then, **for the second type of purification, the purification is done from the bottom.** It is like when at the bottom of a glass, stains or dirt remain: to get rid of it, you fill up with water, the water overflows, the dirt is cleansed.

In a similar way, you and the rest of the sentient beings, the infinite light rays and nectar enter into the entirety of your existent and from there, nectar overflow from your crown chakra, from all your pores, body holes. You understand all the negativities are purified for all of you.

The third one is when the infinite lay rays and nectar reach you and the other sentient beings, it simultaneously and in one instant completely pervade all of you and instantly the entire false are totally purified. Just as in a dark room when you switch on the light the darkness instantaneously disappears.

Now, **you can also specifically purify something like a sickness, spirits harms, nagas harms, landlords' harms, worldly gods, negativities, negative imprints, negative karma more specifically.**

If you are working specifically on sicknesses, you can still use those three visualizations (from the top to the bottom, from the bottom, simultaneous) but you visualize that sickness in its aspect (like cancer for example) but in the form of blood and pus going out from your system. It is very effective.

For some practitioners, that visualization can increase their wind energy: the body becomes too light because something is taken out from you. If your body is not balanced with nutritious food, you become a bit hyper. The wind becomes too high, and it can cause lung.

If somebody has this tendency, the spiritual master will recommend doing more the third practice: with the light, the negativities just disappear. It is not a gradual coming out. The signs are if after doing this practice, you have difficulties to go to sleep, you feel a bit hyper, chest pain, shoulder pain. You are stressed out; the wind element is a bit too high.

Especially, because the retreat is long, three months. It is really important to make sure you do not get lunged and stay healthy.

If it is spirit harms, nagas harms, any elemental harms, then you visualize in the form of a black scorpion, snake, fish, or frogs going up to your body holes or coming out from your pores.

The Vajrasattva practice serves to purify negative karmas, obscurations, downfalls (like broken guru yoga practice, guru devotion, tantric vows, Bodhisattvas vows, sangha vows, refuge vows, 8 Mahayana precepts).

And of course, when you do the Ngöndro practice, you can take the opportunity **to purify any transgression that could have happened in the past, in order to restore the pure vows.**

Then **you can purify any form of transgression in relation to the ten non virtuous actions,** visualizing them in the form of black smoke (not in the form of negativities), like the dark mist from the fire.

Then, **each time after you visualize that, you understand that your entire body becomes clean, pure, in a light form: the state of actualizing the absolute purified enlightened state which is the Guru Vajrasattva' state.** After each purification you do you just abide yourself in Guru Vajrasattva's state, oneness with Guru Vajrasattva.

If you are doing the practice for someone else, for example, for your sick family members or the rest of the numberless sentient beings; you understand and see that their outer aspects do not lie any more in tangible contaminated aggregates image. You see them as clean clear crystal-like light energy form and see them in Guru Vajrasattva.

By doing so, you condition the purification to be actualized in others also.

e. Visualization during (or before if you feel more comfortable) the mantra accumulation

After doing the previous visualizations, you accumulate the 100.000 recitations of the mantra.

So, after the preliminary preparatory practices including arranging tormas, motivation...we have just seen; now, you do the visualization of the front generation either in your heart (facing the same direction than you), either on top of your crown (facing the same direction), or in the space about one foot away above in front of you (facing towards you).

After that **you arise as Guru Vajrasattva** as explained before, and with the understanding of a very straight-forward meditation on emptiness, from there:

- you actualize the eight-petals clean-clear lotus in light form, you understand that as the wisdom aspect of the path
- on top of that moon disc for the method aspect of the path
- on top of that actualization of the syllable HUM
- then a five spoked Vajra with on its center the syllable HUM
- miraculously arises the figure of Guru Vajrasattva (Father-Mother or Father alone)

Or:

- from emptiness arises a lotus which dissolves into emptiness,
- then from that light arises moon disc which dissolves into light,
- from there arises the syllable HUM, which dissolves into light,
- from there arises a five spoked vajra, placing the syllable HUM in the center, which dissolves into light,
- from that light, the entirety of Guru Vajrasattva's image is actualized.

Then, visualize infinite light rays and nectar flowing from the entirety of Guru Vajrasattva.

If you are visualizing Guru Vajrasattva in your heart, this aspect is mainly to purify all the rest of the sentient beings to help them.

If you are doing **the visualization on your crown or in front, it to purify both the rest of the sentient beings and you.** You are still an ordinary person, you actualize Guru Vajrasattva as your merit field, and you get purified through the meditation.

If you have a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation, when you do the self-generation, arising yourself as the deity, brings itself the purification.

The choice of the visualization is not fixed. You can use them all or just one, depending on the utilization you do, how comfortable you are with one or all of them...

Another important aspect is when you see Guru Vajrasattva, **you acknowledge Guru Vajrasattva as a real living enlightened being**, in the nature of your Guru, but the form appears not like tangible (like flesh) but in a light transparent form, even though, the image is so clear (posture, colors, you can refer to the image), it appears almost like tangible.

Once Guru Vajrasattva is visualized, **the three chakras: forehead, throat and heart are adorned with the three syllables Om Ha Hum.** The Hum represents the enlightened heart. Around the heart, place the 100 mantra syllables in a **mantra garland**. When you do the visualization as

explained before, you can also visualize the light and nectar coming out from the Hum and the mantra garland at your heart.

If you can do that while reciting the mantra, with the awareness and clarity of the mantra garland, **that will activate the energy of the purification blessings from Guru Vajrasattva.** You can also combine with the three purification visualizations explained before.

If it is a bit too much to visualize all that, you can also focus on the HUM from which the light and nectar are flowing and do the three purifications.

2. Specific uses of the visualization

From the three syllables, you can also create a laser light ray and direct it to whatever place of your body you have some health issues. For example, shoulder pain. The whole light is assembled in a laser light ray and hits directly the shoulder. There, you can do the three purifications focused on the shoulder or just the third one which can be easier.

The moment the light ray hits instantly that sickness or pain disappears. Through that your entire being is actualized as a crystalized body like Guru Vajrasattva.

Meditate about being completely released from that pain, including its causes: karma and delusions and abide in this total sense of void and bliss, which is the state of Guru Vajrasattvahood, with the conviction you actualize that.

You can also do that as a healing practice for somebody else.

Or, **to purify heavy karma we committed in relation to the Guru** like not fulfilling Guru Yoga practice, or harming the Guru, criticizing the Guru. It can become a great obstacle to our path. You can do similar visualizations, but with a more focused recognition of Guru Vajrasattva being your Guru, to purify all the broken samaya in relation to the Guru Yoga, and you actualize all the stages of the path, Lam Rim, Lojong, Tantric stages of the path; all the blessings all the way up to the perfection of the enlightened qualities.

Do the mantra recitation after that.

Then if you have any specific obstacles in relation to your spiritual path, or in your mundane life: think about it and then do a similar visualization to purify it in the form of whatever it is related to like seen before (sickness = blood and pus...).

At the end, you actualize Guru Vajrasattva and accumulate mantras.

3. When do you do the mantra accumulation?

You do it after those visualizations, or if you are able to do so you can do the recitation while doing the visualization.

Before starting the mantra recitation, you can do an entire meditation on Lam-Rim from Guru devotion, all the way up to enlightenment, the entire teachings on Lojong, Sutra and Tantra. **You can also use the Foundation of all good qualities** which exposes the entire path.

For example, you recite one verse. You reflect on it in front of Guru Vajrasattva and recite after that. Each day you can do one verse.

Because whenever you reflect on the Dharma and virtue, that itself brings purification. Dharma is an antidote: it naturally purifies the negation. **This way you can have such a meaningful retreat.**

For example, when you meditate on patience, naturally it impacts the anger.

Within one session, you can also do twenty visualizations and twenty accumulations.

Basically, whatever you want to purify you can do it, but you must categorize them in one of the three categories of purification visualizations (from top to the bottom, from the bottom, from darkness to light).

During the session, instead of doing verbal recitation, **you can do mental recitation to develop your concentration** and overcome the fault of dullness, sleepiness and excitement and distraction. These are the major obstacles to progress on our spiritual practice, especially Shamata practices. It is a huge obstacle, without Shamata, we cannot develop special insight.

Without special insight, we will not be able to travel successfully through the ten Bhumis. Without traveling there, you cannot purify the defilements and achieve enlightenment.

When you do the mental mantra recitation, you focus on the mantra garland, and you read mindfully in silence each one of the syllables. It requires tremendous concentration.

When you do **verbal recitation including in retreat, and in group retreat**, you cannot do the mantra recitation totally silent. You cannot be too loud neither. **Your voice cannot be heard by the other, but you can hear your voice.** So, do not seat too close. The benefit is **to secure the samaya and at the same time expressing with the verbal speech** there are immense blessings and purifications.

4. End of the session and what to do with the offerings at the end of the day?

At the end, you dedicate and end the session.

As for the ritual offering, **you do not have to change the water offering all the time, just once a day.** But if you are doing several sessions a day, you can add a drip of water before each of them (or perfume for the perfume offering).

At the end of the last session of the day, you should change the water. You clean the water bowl, put it upside down. And early morning, you offer again newly.

And you can add some rice grains or barley grains on top of the other offerings.

As far as the light is concerned, **if the light offering is already finished, by the time you start the next session, you have to put on a new light. If it lasts the whole day, you do not have to change it.**

This way, each session you are making a new offering.

As far as the food offering is concerned, if you can offer, **you should change the fruits. If it is biscuits,** you can leave it there, and **each day you can add a few grains or rice.**

If you are making tormas, you can add each session a small piece of dough to:

- the tormas to the main torma which represents the front generation of Vajrasattva
- to the torma in front
- to the food offerings.

It is very flexible; whatever you have you add.

But for some of us, the wandering people, we do not have all the facilities. Then, you can do like Milarepa, you do not need anything, you do not set up the offerings, a cushion, wherever you are you just utilize your wisdom, your heart. You set up everything from your heart.

That is the easiest, but also the hardest. That means no particular retreat hut, particular time, particular necessity: **wherever you are, whenever you are ready, you conduct the retreat.**

III. Meaning of the mantra

The hundred syllables are actually up to the Ha. Hum Phet was added.

The meaning is: “You, Vajrasattva, have generated the holy mind Bodhicitta according to your pledge, samaya. Your holy mind is enriched with the simultaneous holy actions of the releasing transmigratory beings from Samsara. Whatever happens in my life, happiness or suffering, good or bad, with a pleased holy mind, never give up but please, guide me, please stabilize all happiness including the happiness of the upper realms, actualize all actions and supply common realizations and please make the glory of the five wisdoms abide in my heart” (coming from the small Vajrasattva practice from Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche).

The Hum Phet:

- Hum symbolizes the wisdom of great bliss
- Phet symbolizes the union of great bliss and emptiness.

IV. Practicing Vajrasattva out of retreat

It is an essential practice. Every day we commit karma and more than that, from beginningless lifetimes we have accumulated so much karma. When it is not purified, it has the power to increase.

If you cannot do the practice anytime you are committing a non-virtuous action:

- **at least in the morning,** you set up a proper altruistic motivation and you accumulate so many merits because of the power of the **Bodhicitta motivation** throughout the day
- **and at night, do a Vajrasattva practice:** one, five or ten minutes, whatever time you have: if you cannot do the same visualization, just feel the presence of Guru Vajrasattva and acknowledge “every negativity, any wrongdoing, intentional or unintentional, knowingly or unknowingly, from beginningless lifetimes up to now, I regret, I want to purify them”. Then do the mantra recitation: the best is the 100 syllables one mala, if not 21 times (usual recommendation as a minimum), if not 7 times, even 1 time.

Then, conclude with the same visualization than mentioned before: you actualize Guru Vajrasattvahood and go to bed clean cleared without any negative thinking, completely pure.

That will help purify past negative karma and also the impact of all the complete definite karma already committed that we will definitely have to go through (death, old age, sickness) will be minimized and shorten in term of duration of the experience.

The practice of Vajrasattva will transform yourself to a more virtuous habitual person.

If you cannot do the long mantra, at least the short one: Om Vajra sattva Hum, or just call the name Vajrasattva, 21 times.

V. Retreat guidelines (strict retreat and open retreat)

A. The road map for any retreat sessions (and for any type of retreat)

You can divide the retreat day into **4 longer sessions of a couple of hours each or many shorter sessions of shorter periods like 24 minutes or one and half hours each**, as it suits you.

1 Every session starts with: sitting comfortably in the Vairochana 7-point meditative posture:

- Sit comfortably with your legs crossed in the full-lotus posture, the half-lotus posture or whatever position is most comfortable for you.
- Sit with your awareness directed inward, keeping your body upright, without leaning too far back or bent too far forward.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed and even. Set the right hand over the left with thumbs meeting and rest the hands on the thigh.
- Your eyes should be slightly open (neither wide open nor closed), and they should be fixed on the tip of your nose.
- Do not raise or lower your head nor turn it to one side; set it such that your nose and navel are aligned.
- Set the tip of your tongue upwards to the palate (behind upper teeth).
- Let your teeth and lips rest in their usual, natural position.

2. Quieten the body and mind and focus on the present moment while breathing in and out.

The breathing should be natural and gentle, not noisy, forced or uneven, without directing your breath in any particular way but simply being aware of your inhalation and exhalation.

3. Preliminary prayers, accumulation and dedication

a. Taking Refuge - Generating Bodhicitta

SANG GYÄ CHHÖ DANG TSHOG KYI CHHOG NAM LA

I go for refuge until I am enlightened

JANG CHHUB BAR DU DAG NI KYAB SU CHHI

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

DAG GI JIN SOG GYI PÄI TSHOG NAM KYI

By my merit from giving and other perfections

DRO LA PHÄN CHHIR SANG GYÄ DRUB PAR SHOG (3X)

May I become a buddha to benefit all sentient beings. (3X)

b. Four Immeasurable Prayer

SEM CHÄN THAM CHÄ DE WA DANG DE WÄI GYU DANG DÄN PAR GYUR CHIG

May all sentient beings have happiness and the causes of happiness.

SEM CHÄN THAM CHÄ DUG NGÄL DANG DUG NGÄL GYIGYU DANG DRÄL WAR GYUR CHIG

May all sentient beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

SEM CHÄN THAM CHÄ DUG NGÄL ME PÄI DE WA DANG MI DRÄL WAR GYUR CHIG

May all sentient beings never be separated from the happiness that knows no suffering.

SEM CHÄN THAM CHÄ NYE RING CHAAG DANG NYI DANG DRÄL WÄI TANG NYOM LA NÄ PAR
GYUR CHIG

*May all sentient beings abide in equanimity, free of attachment and hatred for those held close
and distant.*

c. Invocation Prayer

MA LÜ SEM CHÄN KÜN GYI GÖN GYUR CHING

Savior of all sentient beings without exception,

DÜ DE PUNG CHÄ MI ZÄ JOM DZÄ LHA

Divine destroyer of the unbearable hordes of maras and their forces,

NGÖ NAM MA LÜ YANG DAG KHYEN GYUR PÄI

Perfect knower of all things without exception,

CHOM DÄN KHOR CHÄ NÄ DIR SHEG SU SÖL

Bhagavan, together with your retinue, please come here.

d. Actual Visualization on Lama Tsongkhapa

This whole visualization is seen as made of pure light, having nothing to do with physical matter. The image is at the height of the forehead, at a distance of one body length, as large as possible and facing yourself.

First - visualize infinite **pure celestial space** where there is a giant throne, **a square platform** fully and perfectly adorned with all precious jewels and supported by eight white snow-lions (two at each corner). The snow lions are transformations of great bodhisattvas and are visualized alive and made of light.

On the throne there is a white lotus and on the lotus are the sun and moon disks, cushions of light for Guru Lama Tsongkhapa who is seated upon them.

His holy body is transparent, made of pure golden light, his crown chakra is placed with white syllable OM embodying Chenrezig, the Buddha of compassion, red syllable AH at his throat embodying Manjushri, the Buddha of wisdom, and blue syllable HUNG at his heart embodying Vajrapani, the Buddha of power, who is one essence with all the Buddhas, Deities and Gurus.

Light rays emanate from every pore, streaming outward in all directions, and through each beam go numberless manifestations, which ripen sentient beings on to the path to liberation.

He is dressed **in fully ordained sangha robes** which do not touch his body, but remain about one inch from it, showing the power of his realizations. **Wearing Pandit's hat** in golden yellow color

symbolizes the great scholar of a dharma. His aspect is very peaceful. Every atom of his holy body has the power to give realizations.

His hands are in the mudras of granting sublime realizations, symbolizing always liberating numberless beings on the path to liberation from ocean of samsara by giving dharma teachings by his great love and compassion. At his right shoulder on Lotus stamp there is wisdom sword representing the profound dharma and at the left wisdom sutra representing the extensive dharma.

Aura of light is surrounding his whole body. Happening uninterruptedly live transmissions of complete dharma nectar, Lamrim, attended by his heart disciples like Gyaltsab-Jey and Khedrup-Jey, and numberless fortunate ripen disciple including yourself.

e. Seven-Limb Prayer

GO SUM GÜ PÄI GO NÄ CHHAG TSHÄL LO

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

NGÖ SHAM YI TRÜL CHHÖ TRIN MA LÜ BÜL

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

THOG ME NÄ SAG DIG TUNG THAM CHÄ SHAG

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

KYE PHAG GE WA NAM LA JE YI RANG

I rejoice in the virtues of ordinary beings and aryas.

KHOR WA MA TONG BAR DU LEG ZHUG NÄ

Please remain until the end of cyclic existence,

DRO LA CHHÖ KYI KHOR LO KOR WA DANG

And turn the wheel of Dharma for transmigratory beings.

DAG ZHÄN GE NAM JANG CHHUB CHHEN POR NGO

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

f. Mandala Offering

SA ZHI PÖ KYI JUG SHING ME TOG TRAM

This ground, anointed with perfume, strewn with flowers,

RI RAB LING ZHI NYI DÄ GYÄN PA DI

Adorned with Mount Meru, four continents, the sun and the moon:

SANG GYÄ ZHING DU MIG TE ÜL WA YI

I imagine this as a buddha-field and offer it.

DRO KÜN NAM DAG ZHING LA CHÖ PAR SHOG

May all living beings enjoy this pure land!

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAM

g. Requesting Blessings

Nine-line requesting prayer to Guru Lama Tsongkhapa

NGÖ DRUB KÜN JUNG THUB WANG DOR JE CHHANG

Vajradhara, lord of sages, source of all realizations;

MIG ME TSE WÄI TER CHHEN CHÄN RÄ ZIG

Avalokiteshvara, great treasure of non-objectifying compassion;

DRI ME KHYEN PÄI WANG PO JAM PÄL YANG

Manjushri, master of stainless wisdom;

DÜ PUNG MA LÜ JOM DZÄ SANG WÄI DAG

Vajrapani, destroyer of the entire host of maras;

GANG CHÄN KHÄ PÄI TSUG GYÄN LO ZANG DRAG

Losang Dragpa, crown jewel of sages of the land of snow:

KYAB SUM KÜN DÜ LA MA SANG GYÄ LA

To you, Guru-Buddha embodying the three refuges,

GO SUM GÜ PÄI GO NÄ SÖL WA DEB

I make requests showing respect with my three doors.

RANG ZHÄN MIN CHING DRÖL WAR JIN GYI LOB

Please grant your blessings to liberate myself and others.

CHHOG DANG THÜN MONG NGÖ DRUB TSÄL DU SÖL

Please bestow the supreme and common realizations.

[NYUR DU KHYE RANG TA BUR JIN GYI LOB] (3X)

[Please bless me to become quickly like you] (3X)

h. Glimpse Meditation on Lamrim topic

The foundation of all good qualities is the kind and perfect, pure Guru;

TSHÜL ZHIN TEN PA LAM GYI TSA WA RU

Correct devotion to him is the root of the path.

LEG PAR THONG NÄ BÄ PA DU MA YI

By clearly seeing this and applying great effort,

GÜ PA CHHEN PÖ TEN PAR JIN GYI LOB

Please bless me to rely upon him with great respect.

LÄN CHIG NYE PÄI DÄL WÄI TEN ZANG DI

Understanding that the precious freedom of this rebirth is found only once,

SHIN TU NYE KA DÖN CHHEN SHE GYUR NÄ

Is greatly meaningful, and is difficult to find again,

NYIN TSHÄN KÜN TU NYING PO LEN PÄI LO

Please bless me to generate the mind that unceasingly,

GYÜN CHHÄ ME PAR KYE WAR JIN GYI LOB

Day and night, takes its essence.

LÜ SOG YO WA CHHU YI CHHU BUR ZHIN

This life is as impermanent as a water bubble;

NYUR DU JIG PÄI CHHI WA DRÄN PA DANG

Remember how quickly it decays and death comes.

SHI WÄI JE SU LÜ DANG DRIB MA ZHIN

After death, just like a shadow follows the body,

KAR NAG LÜ DRÄ CHHI ZHIN DRANG WA LA

The results of black and white karma follow.

NGE PA TÄN PO NYE NÄ NYE PÄI TSHOG

Finding firm and definite conviction in this,

THRA ZHING THRA WA NAM KYANG PONG BA DANG

Please bless me always to be careful

GE TSHOG THA DAG DRUB PAR JE PA LA

To abandon even the slightest negativities

TAG TU BAG DANG DÄN PAR JIN GYI LOB

And accomplish all virtuous deeds.

CHÄ PÄ MI NGOM DUG NGÄL KÜN GYI GO

Seeking samsaric pleasures is the door to all suffering:

YI TÄN MI RUNG SI PÄI PHÜN TSHOG KYI

They are uncertain and cannot be relied upon.

NYE MIG RIG NÄ THAR PÄI DE WA LA

Recognizing these shortcomings,

DÖN NYER CHHEN POR KYE WAR JIN GYI LOB

Please bless me to generate the strong wish for the bliss of liberation.

NAM DAG SAM PA DE YI DRANG PA YI

Led by this pure thought,

DRÄN DANG SHE ZHIN BAG YI CHHEN PO YI

Mindfulness, alertness, and great caution arise.

TÄN PÄI TSA WA SO SOR THAR PA LA

The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha vows:

DRUB PA NYING POR JE PAR JIN GYI LOB

Please bless me to accomplish this essential practice.

RANG NYI SI TSHOR LHUNG WA JI SHIN DU

Just as I have fallen into the sea of samsara,

MAR GYUR DRO WA KÜN KYANG DE DRA WAR

So have all mother migratory beings.

THONG NÄ DRO WA DRÖL WÄI KHUR KHYER WÄI

Please bless me to see this, train in supreme bodhicitta,

JANG CHHUB SEM CHHOG JONG PAR JIN GYI LOB

And bear the responsibility of freeing migratory beings.

SEM TSAM KYE KYANG TSHÜL THRIM NAM SUM LA

Even if I develop only bodhicitta, but I don't practice the three types of morality,

GOM PA ME NA JANG CHHUB MI DRUB PAR

I will not achieve enlightenment.

LEG PAR THONG NÄ GYÄL SÄ DOM PA LA

With my clear recognition of this,

TSÖN PA DRAG PÖ LOB PAR JIN GYI LOB

Please bless me to practice the bodhisattva vows with great energy.

LOG PÄI YÜL LA YENG WA ZHI JE CHING

Once I have pacified distractions to wrong objects

YANG DAG DÖN LA TSHÜL ZHIN CHÖ PA YI
And correctly analyzed the meaning of reality,
ZHI NÄ LHAG THONG ZUNG DU DREL WÄI LAM
Please bless me to generate quickly within my mindstream
NYUR DU GYÜ LA KYE WAR JIN GYI LOB
The unified path of calm abiding and special insight.

THÜN MONG LAM JANG NÖ DU GYUR PA NA
Having become a pure vessel by training in the general path,
THEG PA KÜN GYI CHHOG GYUR DOR JEI THEG
Please bless me to enter
KÄL ZANG KYE BÖI JUG NGOG DAM PA DER
The holy gateway of the fortunate ones:
DE LAG NYI DU JUG PAR JIN GYI LOB
The supreme vajra vehicle.

DE TSHE NGÖ DRUB NAM NYI DRUB PÄI ZHI
At that time, the basis of accomplishing the two attainments
NAM DAG DAM TSHIG DOM PAR SUNG WA LA
Is keeping pure vows and samaya.
CHÖ MA MIN PÄI NGE PA NYE GYUR NÄ
As I have become firmly convinced of this,
SOG DANG DÖ TE SUNG WAR JIN GYI LOB
Please bless me to protect these vows and pledges like my life.

DE NÄ GYÜ DEI NYING PO RIM NYI KYI
Then, having realized the importance of the two stages,
NÄ NAM JI ZHIN TOG NÄ TSÖN PA YI
The essence of the Vajrayana,
THÜN ZHII NÄL JOR CHHOG LÄ MI YEL WAR
By practicing with great energy, never giving up the four sessions,
DAM PÄI SUNG ZHIN DRUB PAR JIN GYI LOB
Please bless me to realize the teachings of the holy Guru.

DE TAR LAM ZANG TÖN PÄI SHE NYEN DANG
Like that, may the gurus who show the noble path
TSHÜL ZHIN DRUB PÄI DROG NAM ZHAB TÄN CHING
And the spiritual friends who practice it have long lives.
CHHI DANG NANG GI BAR DU CHÖ PÄI TSHOG
Please bless me to pacify completely
NYE WAR ZHI WAR JIN GYI LAB TU SÖL
All outer and inner hindrances.

KYE WA KÜN TU YANG DAG LA MA DANG
In all my lives, never separated from perfect gurus,
DRÄL ME CHHÖ KYI PÄL LA LONG CHÖ CHING
May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma.
SA DANG LAM GYI YÖN TÄN RAB DZOG NÄ
By completing the qualities of the stages and paths,
DOR JE CHHANG GI GO PHANG NYUR THOB SHOG

i. Visualizations, accumulation of the mantra and dedications

You will find a lot of dedication prayers in the Fpmt retreat prayers book.

Dedicate in the three spheres of emptiness and recite the prayers and mantra multiplying the merits (p.374):

To Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Complete Buddha, Vairochana, King of Light, I prostrate. (1x)

To Bodhisattva Mahasattva Samantabhadra, I prostrate. (1x)

TADYATHÄ [OM] PAÑCHENDRIYA AVA BODHANÄYE SVÄHÄ /OM DHURU DHURU JAYA MUKHE SVÄHÄ(7x)

To Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Complete Buddha, Medicine Guru, King of Vaidurya Light, I prostrate.(1x)

To Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Complete Buddha, King [Fully] Accomplishing [All] Dedications and Prayers, I prostrate. (1x)

Due to the blessings of the eminent victorious ones and the bodhisattvas,

The truth of infallible dependent arising,

And the power of my pure special attitude taking responsibility,

May all the aims of my pure prayers be accomplished.

B. Strict retreat timetable

1. Sample timetable

| | |
|------------|---|
| 5am – 7am | First Session |
| 7am – 8am | Breakfast |
| 8am – 9am | Do Karma Yoga Like: Cleaning the retreat environments or conduct preliminary practices like Water bowl Offerings, prostration and etc. or do one's daily sadhana commitments |
| 9am – 11am | Second Session |
| 11am – 1pm | Lunch |
| 1pm – 2pm | Time to reflect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - walking meditation, - reading or listening to teachings in relation to the retreat topic or Lam-Rim, Lojong Daily sadhana practices Prostrations (beneficial for physical health) |
| 2pm – 3pm | Tea-time |
| 3pm – 5pm | Third Session |
| 5pm – 6pm | Dinner |
| 6pm – 7pm | Do Karma yoga and Preliminary practices like: Clearing water bowls offerings, light offerings, prostrations, daily sadhana commitment practices and etc. |
| 7pm – 8pm | Fourth Session |
| 8pm – 9pm | Do purification practice accordingly with Vajrasattva practice or purify negativities by reflecting on the 4 opponent powers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultivate a mind of rejoicing - Do supplication prayers never to be separated from the care and blessings of Guru Buddha - Express sincere requests to Guru Buddha to always turn the wheel of Dharma until end of samsara for the benefit of all beings. - Do final dedication of the day with Bodhicitta and Emptiness |
| | Go to bed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lay down comfortably on the bed in the reclining Buddha posture. -Set altruistic motivation to undertake sleep time for the benefit of sentient beings. -Try to fall asleep by focusing on the natural breathing inhalation and exhalation. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>-Or better still, fall asleep while doing TongLen practices, i.e. when inhaling, think of taking upon oneself, all the sufferings (and the causes of suffering) of all sentient beings to destroy one's self grasping and self-cherishing; when exhaling, think giving all the happiness and merits of the 3 times to each and every single sentient beings and cause them to abide in the everlasting peace and happiness of full enlightenment.</p> <p>-Or try to fall asleep in meditation on emptiness, on deity yoga etc.</p> |
|--|---|

2. Practical advices

Another important thing is, even if you set for a three-hours session, **try to end the session when you are in the peak of the session, when you feel good, do not force.** That good spirit will be so helpful for you to have a very uplifting opening of the next session. If you feel tired, just do one hour, half an hour. In the same way, **do never end a retreat totally exhausted so that you aspire to do another one.**

Do not force yourself. During the retreat you do not feel it because you are inspired, blissed but, actually you are forgetting about your body. You try to practice 24/24 and think you are a hero. You can finish a retreat within three days.

But it is a mistake. Once you get into lung, to overcome that lung is very hard. **It happens to many retreatants. You have to be very careful.**

Also, during a retreat, **make sure you remember your body is an ordinary person body. You need to eat properly, rest on time.**

So, try to wake up a bit early. **The best is to finish the recitation of the first session before the sun rises.** Then, you do the second session after a good breakfast. The best is to finish it before eleven, so you can have an early lunch (especially if you are taking precepts, then you have to finish your lunch before noon).

Because after lunch, you may feel a bit loose, try to spend more time on the first and second sessions. Try to make the third session slightly shorter. Then, regarding the fourth session, because of the dedication of the day, it may take slightly longer. Therefore, if you are having dinner, try to finish the third session before the sun goes down, for the rest of the day not to be too congested.

The last session should be done right after the sun goes down.

Try to have an early dinner. The best is to finish around 7 or 8 o'clock the last session, latest by nine. So that by 9, you are already ready to sleep. **Latest by 10, but not after that, to sleep at least 6 or 7 hours.**

Another important thing is to always start the retreat with just one session and a short one. Do not count the accumulation of prayers or mantras for the general counting of the whole retreat. Just recite three, six, seven times. **Do proper motivation and proper dedication. Whatever the length of time, do as little as possible in term of the number of recitations, because that number will be the minimum requirement each day.** Even if you fall ill, even if you are tired, if you get lung, whatever; the minimum must be that number in order to sustain the practice and not break the retreat.

As far as it concerns Ngöndro practice, you can start anytime the first session, in the morning, in the evenings (certain deity yoga requires to start at night, some even at midnight, others in daytime).

Same, the retreat should end with one morning session. That last session does not count for the accumulation of the numbers. Focus more on the dedication and auspicious prayers.

You have just completed a retreat, you have accumulated so many merits, you are in just a pure position. So, even the slightest dedication you do is far more effective than any other dedication you have done before the retreat.

Then, if you cannot to do lengthy session, you can do 6, 7, 10 short sessions. **But each session must be organized with a motivation, recitation, dedication.**

Also, **in your heart never regard the number as a target.** That is also one of the ways that somehow a retreat does not go well because you are not doing the meditation properly. You are rushing.

The teachings and the Gurus always say: “when you do retreat meditation is the main thing”. Counting the number is just part of it.

For a Ngöndro retreat, a fire puja is not required.

C. Open retreat: how to “go on retreat” while combining family and professional lives

In today’s time, there are a lot of ups and downs. **You go first into initiations, some go directly for Highest Yoga Tantra initiations,** then, **only after you start to learn teachings on Tantra, about the preliminaries and start to practice.**

Even if we have already chosen the other way, we can still reverse. **We can refresh the tantric initiation,** the best is to take it again from the same Guru you already received the initiation from, if not with another qualified Guru. **In between, you can start to do retreats.**

Sometimes, to get the whole commentary is very rare. Then, if we wait until we receive the commentary, it may be difficult. Time passes so fast. **So, what you can do is eventually try to get at least some general guidelines on the Refuge, on how to conduct the session.** And after that, the best is to go into retreat.

But then, in today’s time, life can be so busy. It is so difficult to find dedicated time, **you can do an open retreat: you do at least one session a day.**

If you receive specific individual instructions from Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche or different Lamas regarding the accumulation of prayers or mantras, type of practice, or even on the specific

time of the retreat, particular place; **then trying to fulfill them is of course the most important in the practice.**

But then, if the Lama just advised you to do some Ngöndro retreat practice, then that means you can do in your convenient way. Here the point is if someone is really busy or already doing a lot of practices with only a short amount of time, in that case one of the criteria to fulfil the retreat is you have to conduct a session daily until you complete the target.

You cannot break even for a day until for example you achieve the 100.000 Refuge recitation (plus the supplement of 10.000). You have to be consistent. That is the first criteria.

You can maybe do it early morning, before the family is up, at dawn time, around 3 o'clock, up to 5 o'clock. If you can manage, sometimes you can do two sessions. **The other in the evening.** And **once a while, when you have time, you can do four sessions.**

The number of sessions is not limited, you can do 6, 7 sessions. During the day, when your husband is doing the groceries, or your children are out, you have one hour or even 45 minutes. It can be conducted even in one minute, isn't? This way in your busy life, whenever you get some free time, you can be flexible, but consistent.

Of, course any retreat should be conducted setting a proper motivation, which is the usual way Bodhicitta motivation based on refuge, then the rest of the preliminary practices as I mentioned before (do accordingly with what you can afford).

Then, you engage in the actual practice on the first day once you settle on your seat, then on the basis of the preliminary, recite maybe three times the Refuge prayer. Then, do the dedication accordingly as extensive as you wish.

But I would suggest you do as brief as there is in the dedication prayer book, so you can easily perform that much every day. That is the important part in order to be able to continue with the retreat in any circumstances.

But as a minimum, in order for you to accomplish the retreat, the first day, you just do just one session (a short one). **Because whatever amount of time, amount of practice, or mantra accumulation you do on that very first session, you have to sustain that number daily during the whole retreat as a minimum, until you accomplish the 100.000** (and the supplement of 10.000).

Sometimes we may be sick, you may need to stay at the hospital, traveling in an airplane, we have to manage to reach that number. For example, you do the recitation of the Refuge Prayer one time. **As long as you do not break that and sustain it, then even if it takes you one year, two years, it is ok.**

You can do that not only for the preliminaries but also for the Guru Yoga deity commitment retreat.

As far as it is concerned **combining the retreat with other practices,** for example another Ngöndro practice or even your daily practices, **because in all the other practice, Refuge and Bodhicitta are always here; you just conduct the practice, and when you come to the Refuge and Bodhicitta part, you recite more Refuge and Bodhicitta prayers.** And also in the motivation, you set the intention that you are conducting the Ngöndro retreat, together with the other Ngöndro retreat.

Then, you can also conduct as **an open retreat** since life is so busy. As a retreat you still have to set the boundaries, but it can a huge boundary, the entire city, the entire country can be within your boundaries, the entire people of the country. But in those retreats, try your best to stay a bit more focused, instead of being like the usual way.

If you are staying in the same city for the whole day, try your very best to go back there to conduct your sessions (if you are doing several sessions a day, yet not doing a strict retreat). It could be your house, your prayer room, if you do not have a prayer room, or staying at someone else's place, your bed, instead of doing it in your car or in the office.

Of course, you can do the rest of your practice there, but for this particular practice as it is a retreat practice, it is better to do it there.

But, if you are moving from one place to another, then you can do wherever you find a place that is conducive for you. It can even be during a flight or in a hotel.

Even if you are doing your refuge prayer three times during daytime and three times at night, try to always be aware of remaining in the refuge during the whole day (which is the reason of three times a day and at night).

This way you can still conduct the retreat. The day you accomplish the 100.000 (and the 10.000 of supplement), then you can claim you accumulated the completion of that retreat.

Acknowledgement and dedication

Extracts of the transcripts of “Saturday Workshop: How to Approach the Study and Practice of the Lamrim”, Thubten Norbu Ling, March 2023 (Tenzin Kunzang: all mistakes, errors, omissions are mine only)

Extracts of the transcripts of FPMT Longku Center Bern Switzerland, Ngöndro practices, September 2021(Tenzin Kunzang: all mistakes, errors, omissions are mine only)

Extracts of the Preparatory Practice Guide for LamRim Meditation, compiled by Taitung Foundation Inc

Quotes from the teachings of FPMT Langri Tangpa Australia, Ngöndro practices – The refuge September 2024 (Ven. Tenzin Kunzang: all mistakes, errors, omissions are mine only)

Extracts of the transcripts of FPMT Rinchen Jangsem Ling, Malaysia, Introduction to Tantra Nov - Dec 2024 (Ven. Tenzin Kunzang: all mistakes, errors, omissions are mine only)

Extracts of Shamata meditation – A daily training Guide, Geshe Tenzin Zopa

In the footsteps of the Guru, compilation of Geshe Tenzin Zopa’s teachings on Guru devotion, ebook, [gurudevotion.pdf](#)

Extracts of the transcripts of Vajra Cutter Sutra retreat, Land of Medicine Buddha, March 2024 (Ven. Tenzin Kunzang: all mistakes, errors, omissions are mine only)

Fpmt retreat prayers book

Vajrsattva Father – Mother PDF, shopfpmt@fpmt.org (cover picture)

With the understanding of the three spheres of emptiness, and just as all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the three times and ten directions did it before or will, the merits are dedicated to the good health and long life of all our Gurus, starting with Geshe Tenzin Zopa la, for the swift and unmistakable return of Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche; the success of all our Gurus’ holy projects and legacy; as well as dedicated to create the complete causes and conditions for all the rest of the sentient beings to see all their inner, outer and secret obstacles dispelled, so they can practice the complete Dharma, wholeheartedly, steadily and swiftly, achieve the two tantric stages of generation and completion within this very lifetime, according to the teachings and instructions received from their precious teachers, for the welfare of all beings.

May all be auspicious for Geshe la, Geshela’s teachings, programs and projects, starting with this Ngöndros special program and the initiations that will follow.

Care of Dharma Materials

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

Printed Dharma materials, as well as phones, tablets, laptops, and hard drives containing Dharma, should be kept off the floor, beds, chairs, meditation cushions, and all other places where people sit or walk.

Dharma materials should not be stepped over or put in places where the feet or buttocks will point at them. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separate from more mundane materials.

Other objects, including statues, stupas, ritual implements, malas, reading glasses, and so forth, should not be placed on top of Dharma books and devices containing Dharma materials.

Avoid licking the fingers to turn the pages of Dharma texts. If it is necessary to dispose of printed Dharma materials, they should be burned rather than thrown in the trash.

When burning Dharma texts, visualize that the letters transform into an A (ॐ) and the A absorbs into your heart. Imagine burning blank paper. As the paper burns, recite OM ॐ HŪṀ or the Heart Sutra, while meditating on emptiness.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche recommends that images of holy beings, deities, and holy objects not be burned.

Ideally, if undamaged, they should be put in a stupa.

Otherwise, put them high up in a tree inside a well-sealed structure, something like a bird house, so that the images are protected from the weather and do not end up on the ground.