

The Uncommon preliminaries to enter Tantra – Ngöndro practices

Refuge, Vajrasattva, Mandala offering, Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga

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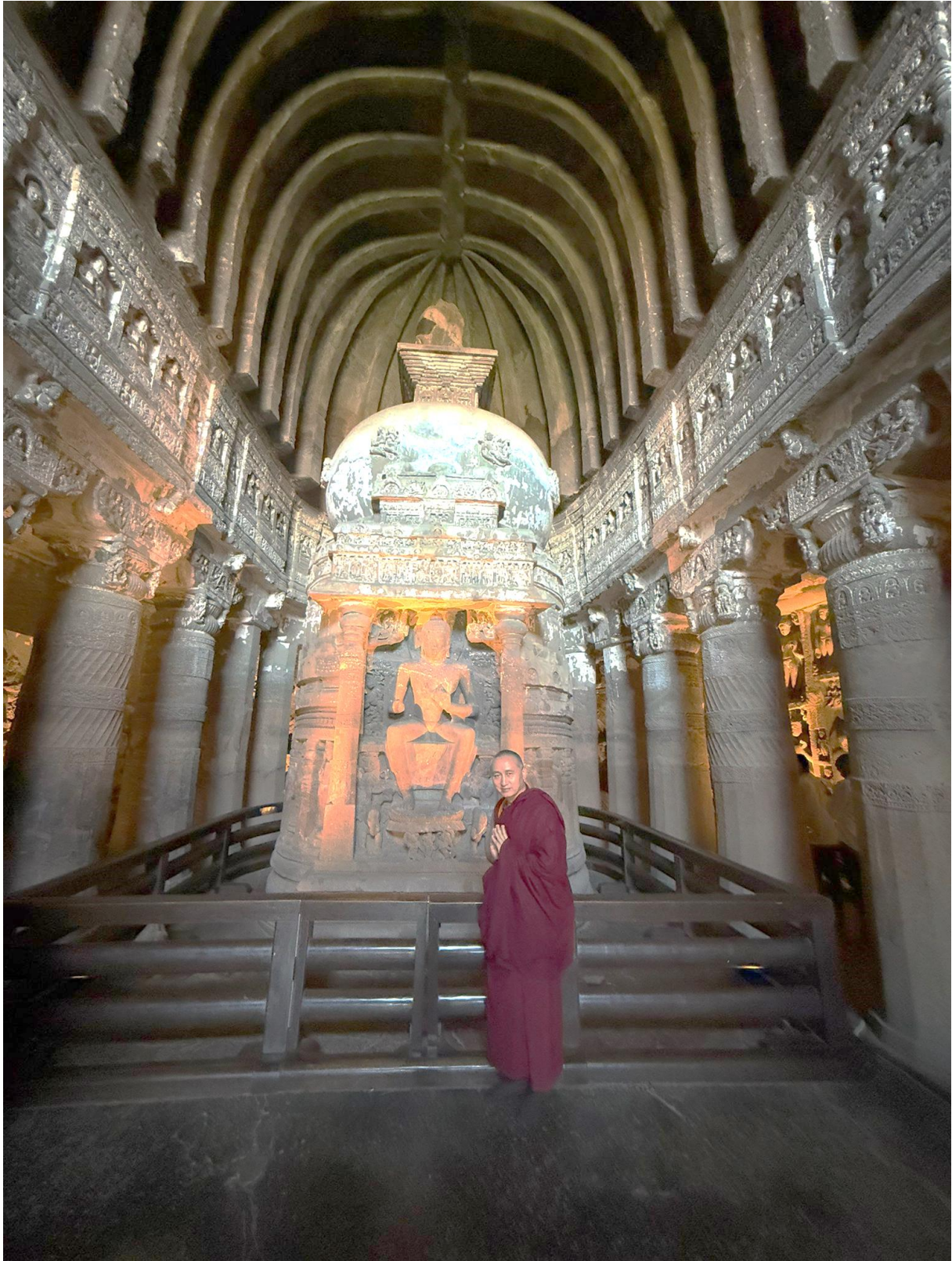


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Introduction to the Ngöndros practice

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 merit to digest such 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 turned 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 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 falseness 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.

By upholding the common practice, even one recitation of the Migtsema will be the direct cause of your liberation and full enlightenment. Can you imagine the impact of a whole year practicing Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga Sadhana and Migtsema recitation?

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

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.

Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga retreat can be conducted in one or two weeks. But I purposely chose to make it a whole year of practice. Ultimately it is about purifying and accumulating merits. Conventionally, all the rest of your practice whether you are a scholar, a retreatant, a Lojong practitioner, will be boosted, nurtured. **How wonderful we have so much time to practice, it is a blessing.**

One of the commitments to go into these four major Ngöndros retreats is to receive instructions from someone who has received the instructions, the Ngöndro teaching (a great commentary or instructions on the four major Ngöndros).

I will regard those sessions as the Ngöndro teaching, even for those who participated in the teachings online or only participated in the first session. So, you can conduct the retreat. Also, there is a short transcript (that booklet you are reading now) which is not fully edited but it can serve as an instruction.

The Vajrasattva retreat will require being physically present to receive the initiation for the retreat to be considered as a retreat.

II. Ngöndros retreats – Preparation and preliminary practices

A. 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.**

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

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 long-life grass in the same direction as one 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 **bless 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 bless 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 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 set up 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. Setting up 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.

You can conduct the whole 6 Preparatory practices with the whole 7 Limbs practice as a whole practice by itself and after that do the sadhana of the Ganden Lha Gyalma and start the accumulation after the glimpse of Lam Rim meditation.

Or you can start the sadhana of the Ganden Lha Gyalma now (and start the accumulation after the glimpse of Lam Rim meditation).

Or you can conduct the whole 6 Preparatory practices with the whole 7 Limbs practice as a whole practice by itself and use another sadhana. For example, the Refuge sadhana for the refuge retreat.

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

- Limb of Prostrations :

Within those seven Limbs, prostration and purification are aimed at purifying obstacles. The rest are mainly aimed at accumulating merits.

They are mainly based on the Sutra of Good conduct, the King of Prayers as explained by Lama Tsongkhapa in the Middle Length Lam-Rim:

*As for the limb of prostration, the **prostration combining the three doors** is set out in the stanza:*

I bow respectfully with body, speech, and mind to all the Buddhas among men without exception, in how ever many worlds there are in the ten directions and three times.

You are mainly doing the prostrations to all the Buddhas among the three worlds, all the Buddhas of the ten directions and all the Buddhas of the three times.

It not only purifies the minor limitations of our body, speech and mind but also their roots: the ego-centered ignorance, in another words, the self-grasping ignorance. Prostration is honoring, paying respect to something, someone higher or more important than your centered-egoistic identity, and that itself is the direct antidote to the root, the ignorance.

It is that powerful. So, when you conduct prostrations, at an immediate level, it purifies the imbalanced physical energies, imbalanced physical chakras, imbalanced nervous system, the blood flow, the organs from crown to toe.

Even for a bone dislocation, when you do proper long prostrations, it helps to adjust. The harmonized outer physical nervous system, the organs and the blood flow will directly impact a harmonious function of the inner chakra, the channels, the subtle spiritual nervous system and the drops (the subtle drop needs to be intact in order to utilize even the most profound practice of the clear light).

If our drops are not intact, pure, undamaged, and the channels are intact, then whatever meditation we do becomes very, very effective. Otherwise, it does not work. That is why the prostrations directly, immediately, impact that.

Then, when you do prostrations, emotionally you get some improvements. You may find it quite magic. If you feel a bit low, a bit unhappy, a bit confused, a bit dull, prostrations will immediately uplift you, your mind becomes clearer. You become more energized.

From a medical point of view, it is really healthy.

Then, in Tibetan Buddhist environment, especially in a monastic environment, there is not a lot of exercise, but most of the monks and nuns live very long life. What they eat is very simple, they do not have a lot of varieties of food. But it helps them to keep being happy emotionally and healthy physically, especially long prostrations.

When you do prostrations, each of the gestures has a special meaning.

First you join your two hands putting your thumbs inside your palms, that is the Buddhist way of doing prostrations (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 method** to perform powerful practice of veneration, of purification, whatever benefit that comes from the practice you perform will be dedicated for that.

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, as in slow motion. Your feet should be together side by side, because then all your body structure is very straight up, stretched. If your balance is not that good, of course you can put a bit of distance between them.

Then, when you do the hand gesture, you should stretch your arms as much as possible before gathering your hands on your crown.

The more you cover space and ground you cover around you with your gestures, the higher **the number of dusts you cover. This 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, put your hands a bit back behind and gather them in a vast gesture, as if you were gathering things; before stretching your arms ahead and put them again at your crown, before stretching and expanding them again around your body to pull you back on foot. It's a bit as if you were swimming.

You should not remain too long on the ground. **You should get up as swift as possible.** Then, when you do down, you always touch the ground with **full flat palms**, not fists, and stretch your fingers as much as you can. Traditionally, you would do **three times** like that in front of holy objects or your Guru. But you can do as many times as you can.

Then, they are **short prostrations** called prostrations of Five Limbs: forehead, palms and knees. You do not have to lie down. You can also do three times just the hand gesture and bow down the upper part of your body. 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 gesture of respect, we do not only do it to the Guru or the Buddhas (even a holy object the size of your thumb, or a "defect" painting or Tsa-tsas), but to everybody. **There is a saying: you offer the same respect that you have to the Buddha to all sentient beings, because the sentient beings are the whole purpose of the existence of the Buddha.**

Therefore, the culture of greeting everybody with that gesture of respect is so meaningful whenever we meet each other. So, when you go to pilgrimage or to a temple, one thing to accumulate merits is to at least do the prostrations with your hand at your heart to all the holy objects.

That was the physical type of prostrations. Now, the **verbal prostrations: it consists in offering praises.** If you are doing prostrations to the Guru, you can say:

“All magnificent Glorious Enlightened Guru, may I become just like you” or “I prostrate to the Guru”, “Lama Kyab Su Chhi Wo”. Or to the Buddha: “I prostrate to Buddha”, or to the Dharma “I prostrate to the Dharma”, or to the Bodhisattvas “I prostrate to the Bodhisattvas”, you prostrate to the Arhat, to the Sangha, to the Stupa.

Whenever you are saying those words, you are doing the prostration of speech. It is because Sariputra, in his previous life had prostrated in front of Buddha’s picture and expressed his aspiration to become like Buddha that Sariputra had this immense karma to be one of the closest to Shakyamuni Buddha and his attendant.

Then, **mental prostration**: you see the Guru as Buddha and generate faith and veneration. You do that to the Buddha too, remembering his qualities and express genuine sense of inspiration and faith. You do that to the Dharma, the Sangha, all holy beings.

When **you do prostrations and want to purify something specifically in relation to the Guru**, if you displeased the Guru, disobeyed the Guru, or Guru’s advice, did not follow the Guru’s instructions, or criticize the Guru, whatever karma you committed, maybe in the past, in this lifetime or there may be possibility in the future, such karmic imprints may be carried in your heart, in order to purify that; **then you recite: “Lamala Kyab Su Chhi Wo”**. Then if you do manage you do long prostrations, or one of the other forms of physical prostrations, three times, hundreds of times.

Then, if you have **some karma committed in relation to certain holy objects, certain holy places, certain individual holy beings, and certain Sangha**, then **you can express their names, and do prostrations**. Under the instruction of Manjushri that saw he needed to purify obscurations and accumulate merits in order to realize emptiness directly, Lama Tsongkhapa engaged in **35 Buddhas** Prostrations practice and accumulated many hundred thousand of prostrations, on top of mandala offerings (specifically for the accumulation of merits). You can establish a special karmic connection with 35 Buddhas and 35 specific qualities of those Buddhas, that you will be able to achieve, and the 8 Medicine Buddhas.

Or you can also do **Vajrasattva** recitation.

But the most common one is the 35 Buddhas. It is even better if you memorize the 35 Buddhas prayer, because when you recite them, you are doing verbal prostrations too. Then, by reflecting on the meaning, you do mental prostrations at the same time. **By combining them, you are doing the three prostrations together.**

You can also recite the **8 Medicine Buddhas to make it a powerful healing practice**: in the Medicine Buddha puja, you have a section of reciting seven times the names of the Medicine Buddhas.

If you cannot memorize them, you can record your own voice and play it when you do the prostrations. You can listen to others’ recordings too, but it is best with your voice to accumulate merits of your own speech. Then, you focus on your physical gesture and mental attitude generating faith in the Buddhas and their qualities.

The Sutras describe all the benefits of doing prostrations. The first one is you will have a beautiful body whenever you will reincarnate, not in a worldly way, **a meritorious body to inspire others in virtue, to influence them with virtuous inspiration**. Then, wherever you are, it brings harmony, peace and happiness, people feel so comfortable and happy to be around you. Not only the people, but your presence also blesses the place and the other living creatures. The

place you touch is where everybody gathers and feel so wonderful and inspired. You create that kind of karma and energy.

Then, **you will be able to live pure morality**. It conditions to observe the vows in pure morality, that is why those who keep Tantric vows, Bodhisattvas vows, Sangha vows, one of the tools to preserve pure vows is doing prostrations. You will have more devotion, the more prostration you do and the more devotion you develop, towards your Guru, the Dharma, Buddha, Sangha, virtues, ...You will always pursue being near to the Guru, being near to the Dharma, the Buddha, the Sangha.

Your mind will become so clear and courageous towards activities in relation to the Dharma, to virtues activities, so enthusiastic. Otherwise, you will always excuse not to practice, instead of having the mental attitude of “I can do it, I will do it right on”. Eventually you will develop the most courageous Bodhicitta mind.

Then, “I will achieve enlightenment. I will make sure I will achieve enlightenment within this very lifetime, within this very retreat time, on this very cushion, within this very journey”. Then, you will achieve enlightenment, the exalted wisdom. The prostrations will act as a direct cause, not a conditional cause, to the Dharmakaya body of the Buddha, the wisdom body of the Buddha.

You cannot have all the Buddhas on your altar, but one thing you can do is inviting all the Buddhas as your merits field where you are going to do prostrations there to all of them through your mind.

While doing prostrations, you manifest yourself in numberless bodies, not only the merits field is numberless but the practitioner too through your visualization, to accumulate another round of numberless merits. Then, you also **visualize all your previous reincarnations** in all Realms, all of them manifested under the form of a human, same as you, you carry the same mind set, the same devotion, same inspiration and same manner, exactly.

You also bring all your future reincarnations, the possibilities of being reincarnated in all Realms, and all your reincarnations in the Bodhisattvas path, the 10 Bhumis Bodhisattvas path, all of your reincarnations as a sentient being, same as you, same inspiration...And you are the leader. When you recite you are the chant leader. When you are doing it, everybody is watching you.

That itself actualizes the effectiveness of purification of past karma as well as the purification of all the karmic imprints that will result for future consequences.

You absolutely feel their presence. It is the words of the Buddha. So, if you really follow the instructions of the Buddha, it becomes real. Not just imaginary. Sometimes you can visualize as big as Mount Meru to cover more space, or sometimes so tiny as atoms, so you have numberless Buddhas, numberless beings, numberless reincarnations of you around, to accumulate extraordinary merits and extraordinary purification.

As explained in the Middle Length Lam-Rim, you can use this verse from the King of Prayers to combine with the **physical prostrations**:

Bowing to the power of prayer for good conduct, all the buddhas directly appear to my mind. I bow sincerely to all these buddhas with as many bodies as there are atoms in the world.

Then, **mental prostrations**:

On every atom, as many buddhas as there are atoms are surrounded by bodhisattvas. Everyone is absorbed in meditation on suchness. I fully venerate all of these accomplished ones.

Then, **verbal prostrations:**

I extol the good qualities of all the buddhas. I praise all of the sugatas with the sounds of an ocean of songs in voices of inexhaustible seas of praise.

It is important to utilize your own speech. This way you use the sense organ, the tongue, which is part of the physical aggregate, to create a sound that will create its own karmic impact. Then, the sound, the tongue, the body, the mind, each of them has its own special karmic meritorious accumulation, which will be a cause to bring all the benefit from the prostrations.

- **Limb of Offerings**

You should regard each of the different types of offering in their numberless infinite forms.

The offerings that can be consumed, regard them as nectar. Those which cannot be consumed, you offer them as jewels, precious gems, beautiful objects to see, to hear, to be touched. For example, flowers, it can be divine flowers in the Pure Lands, decorative flowers in the celestial of the deities, you visualize them. Then, in the human realm flowers, you can visualize all the flowers that exist in the world, not only the flowers you planted, all the wildflowers and so on.

You can offer what is owned by you and by others in the visualization. When you offer things that belong to others, including tree or plants owned by Nagas or spirits, those beings accumulate merits too, you are sharing your merits with them, that how you are helping them. You are benefiting them. So, when you do not have time for meditation, wherever you go, whatever you see, you can say “Om Ha Hum” and offer everything.

Then, everything around becomes pure. The environment becomes like an extensive celestial offering by the power of the mantra: Om multiplies, Ha transforms into divine pure offering, Hum purifies all the impure substances in relation to the object (even ugliness, incompleteness). On top of that if you are able to dedicate the merits to the owner, that would really be a Bodhisattvas’ way of life.

Then, if you are practicing Tantra, you can use the Eight Lines of the Dakinis prayers. Whenever you recite that, you are actualizing what you see as Heruka, Vajrayogini celestial. For example, if you see a mountain and recite the prayers, that mountain becomes Vajrayogini Mountain.

So, now when you go for a walk, **you just make extensive offering yoga of practice.** Similarly, you turn your groceries into supplies for the Buddhas, the Dakinis. This is so powerful. That is why it is called secret mantra, swift path, because it is so precious and powerful.

Similarly, instead of going to the toys store to buy cows, horses, elephants for the altar, in the fields, there are plenty of cows and horses. If you do the offering of those animals, the animals will benefit from it. You can offer also your body, others’ body.

So, even when you see your friends and family, instead of saying “hello” you can say “Om Ha Hum” if they do not mind. If the person is wearing beautiful ornaments, or clothes, you do the same “Om Ha Hum”. You cause them to accumulate a similar benefit than you, even if they do not know the Dharma.

If you carry that kind of mind, you start to see offerings to the Buddha in everything through your practice. This is very powerful to transform our mind and purify our impure views, our negativities.

Same, **any sound becomes offerings**. Now, you are carrying the lenses or the earplugs of the offering. Whatever sound you hear, you make an offering, even the complains of someone, you also make an offering out of it. If you really want to overcome the complaints of somebody, arguing does not help, you make the offering.

By the power of your own interpretation and perception, that is what you call taking everything onto the path to enlightenment. It is a Lojong practice. Then if you can offer even a bell to the stupa or holy object, there are so many benefits.

Even when we offer incense, there is some light when we light it up, that also becomes a light offering. That light also will be a substitute to the butter lamp if you do not have one. Similarly, crystals in the sun will reflect rainbowed colored lights, then, the light of the sun, of the moon, the lights in the city the light in your room. We ignore all that and we just offer tiny candles and think we are great practitioners.

And that will make meaningful the use of electricity, otherwise, turning on the lights will exhaust your merits and money. Think of Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche and all his massive light offerings. Making light offerings is so important to purify our ignorance. Our wisdom will increase, emptiness will be realized as quick as possible.

Incense offering includes two practices: the offering of incense sticks and the incense powder which has a different meaning. The sand mandala too includes colored sand mixed with medicinal colors, incense colors, herbs colors, natural precious colors if you do it properly. If you gather them together and put that on the altar. That also becomes part of the incense offering.

You can make the offering even more meaningful conjoining the offering with the Bodhisattvas' way of offering, which is called the Samantabhadra's clouds of offering practice, you can find in the prayer book. Just by the power of the prayers, it becomes extensive.

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.

Whatever offering you do on top of those, you mention them and then recite if you want to put the offering into words:

Through the power of faith along with virtuous deeds, I pay homage and make offerings to all the conquerors.

- 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.

In the Middle-Length Lam-Rim, quoting the King of Prayers, you will find this verse:

I confess each and every one of the negative actions I have done with my body, speech, and mind influenced by desire, hatred, and ignorance.

Any limitation needs to be confessed.

No questions about the negative actions that performed through our body, speech and mind, that are by nature negative such as killing: causing life of others, causing pain to others, by nature is negative, whether you have this motivation or not, whether you have wrong or positive motivation or not, it is negative.

Misleading others with words by nature is negative. In a similar way, the arising of desirous attachment, like arising of anger, aversion, ignorance, does not need motivation, by nature is negative. **It is harmful by nature.**

Then, **the action that are not by nature harmful but done with a harmful motivation or intention, or a harmful conclusion, they have to be purified.** Similarly, there are certain actions, limitation or aspiration which can be included as negative, as obstacles, that need to be purified, even though by nature it is not negative, such as self-nirvana, **aspiring to self-nirvana**, to remain just for yourself completely in the peace of nirvana just by completely forgetting about the concern of well-being of others. Comparing to the altruistic path, **it falls into a limitation and needs to be purified.**

Then, there are many limitations in relation to correct views, as by nature not believing in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. By nature, not believing in karma, is not negative, but in relation to the view that you hold as a Buddhist, whose views are based on the Dharma, then if you do not believe into Buddhas, Dharma, Sangha then it falls into wrong views. You need to purify that. Then, if you do not believe in the laws of causes and effects, rebirth and reincarnation, then, as a Buddhists all these are limitations that need to be purified.

There are also many views that carry limitations, in comparison to the ultimate view. By nature, the view held by Vaibashika or Sautantrika or Cittamatra or Madhyamaka Svatantrika, holding the dualistic view of inherent existence, or even non-Buddhist view like permanent existence, are not negative. So many people follow these views. They have their own reason to follow that and are benefited from that including in believing in God, in a creator.

But, as a follower of the correct view of Madhyamika Prasangika, following the view of Shakyamuni Buddha, of Nagarjuna, Lama Tsongkhapa, then the earlier views are to be negated. They are obstacles. They carry limitations and need to be purified. Otherwise, we will not be able to actualize the ultimate view, isn't it?

Therefore, "negative action" are not just the actions that are negative by nature, or by intention. There are many different forms of limitations. This audience is mainly a Mahayanic audience. Lam-Rim audience are Mahayanic audience, even if at the moment for some of us the purpose is for now only higher rebirth or a purposeful life. Ultimately our goal is to achieve Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. Even if you are following the small scope, your ultimate goal is to follow the higher scope.

Self-liberation is due to desire. Desire is a very broad subject. In relation to the individuals who aspire to self-liberation, they may not accept that their intention to pursue self-liberation is due to attachment desire. But from the Mahayanic point of view, this is attachment desire, because this is about self-concern, the concern of self-cherishing purpose, isn't it?

One of the benefits of doing confession purification practices is that we can purify what we committed in the past, also stop committing new action in the future. In relation to results, to purify the consequences of the past committed karma and stop the formation of the future karmic consequences to be experienced.

There are many forms of purification. A very common in the Tibetan Buddhism Mahayana tradition is Samayavajra practice, Vajrasattva practice, 35 Buddhas confession practice. They are the general antidotes to purify any form of limitations. Then, the main element of all those practices is the Four Opponent Powers.

It is the key element to make the purification possible: Reliance or Refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, the deity or the Guru; then, the Power of Regret or acknowledging the mistake as a mistake; then, the Power of Antidote; then, the Power of Refrain or making a firm commitment not to do it again. The Vinaya Sutra emphasizes that there is not any negative action that cannot be purified by the four opponent powers, even the five heinous crimes.

The negative action comes in two forms: Definite and Indefinite Karma. Once you committed a karma, once the four factors of the karma are already completed, including its conditions for the results to ripen, one has definitely to experience the results. This is called definite karma.

By applying the four-opponent power, one will still have to experience the results; but the purification will reduce the duration of time of the consequences, or the intensity of the consequences.

Certain karmas are supposed to be experienced in the Lower Hell Realms, but due to the power of the purification practice, the results will be only experienced by having a disturbing dream, or a headache, or a stomach pain, or born in the Hell Realm but for just one moment, or a day, instead of remaining there for eons.

You can find the Samayavajra and the Vajrasattva Practice in the FPMT Retreat Prayers Book (to listen the entirety of Geshela's instructions for those two practices as guided meditations, Middle Lam-Rim, June 2024, teaching #9: <https://longku.fpmt.ch/de/mediathek/teachings/audio/1378/2.2.7.1391>).

The practice of Samayavajra is particularly recommended to purify broken Samaya in relation to Guru, if you harass the Guru, or any limitations that we have in our mind stream for beginningless lives. Certain individuals not finding qualified Guru could be due to karma committed in the past, that needs to be purified. Then, you can take that Samayavajra practice as purification and that may help.

Or, you may have found a Guru, and you may find it so difficult to obtain teaching, or you may find it is so difficult to get the blessings in relation to the Guru or to feel the benefits in the relation to the Guru, again it has to do with karma, so you can do this practice.

While doing the Samayavajra practice, you need to have a genuine sense of trust, to believe, a total conviction in the practice. On the basis of the Four Opponent Powers, take refuge in Samayavajra (1st power), confess and purify all your negative karma, even those that you do not

remember (2nd power). It is very possible that we must have committed some karma that we forgot since beginningless past lives.

Confess also all the tendencies to commit karma in the future, all of them have to be purified with a sense of urgency “I must purify right now” as if you have swallowed a poison. Generate an even greater sense of urgency: if we pass away from this life before purifying all the negativities, there are so many negative karmas that would bring the possibility to be born in the Lower Hell Realms for countless eons. That is much scarier than just dying because of poison. Then the visualization and the mantra recitation are the 3rd power, the antidote.

Then, hear Samayavajra saying:

Guru Samayavajra then says: “All your negative karmas, obscurations, and degenerated samayas are completely purified.”

The Omniscient One can see even your subtle karma, while we cannot. Until we become Buddha, we will not be able to see it. So, trust the Omniscient One when he says that statement that you are completely purified. Then, make sure to be mindful that “even at the cost of my life, I will not commit any negativity in the future” (4th power).

There should be a time frame in order to make an effective purification: for example, “at least until I finished this purification practice”, or until next morning, best being “even at the cost of my life I will not again”. The rest of the sadhana can only be done if you have the initiation, otherwise, you simply visualize Samayavajra dissolve into a light form and enter your heart merging with it and Guru Samayavajra and you become inseparable.

Meditate on the three spheres of emptiness: meaning understand yourself, the creator of the negative karma, the karma created and the purification practice (the blessings; you being inseparable with the deity), all lies in emptiness of inherent existence. Then, dedicate the merits.

In a similar way, you can do **Vajrasattva** with or without initiation, there will just be differences in the way of visualizing Father and mother Vajrasattva or Solitary Vajrasattva (depending on the initiation), at the top of your head or merged with your heart, but without the arising of Vajrasattva as in the Highest Yoga Tantra sadhana. If possible, one of the most meaningful things, on the basis of a daily 21 times of Vajrasattva 100 syllables mantra recitation with a glimpse of meditation of the Four Opponent Powers, then conducting a 100,000 Vajrasattva retreat.

It is regarded as very powerful and one of the meaningful highlights of the precious human rebirth. It requires about three months of your full-time. And the rest of life with a daily 21 times mantra recitation. **That will give a great protection of not committing new karma and will purify intensively past karmas, even those of the karmas newly accumulated will never multiplied. Because once the karma is committed it multiplies.**

It is good to memorize these particular verses:

“Through ignorance and delusion, I have broken and degenerated my commitments. Guru, be my savior and refuge. Lord, holder of the vajra, endowed with great compassion, in you, the foremost of beings, I take refuge.”

(Vajrasattva replies) *“Son of the lineage, your negative karmas, obscurations, and all broken and degenerated commitments are now cleansed and purified”.*

Every now and then, while you are walking, eating, doing anything, just take one minute and do this. It will be really helpful. Or, suddenly something happens, for example, while walking you accidentally step onto an ant. Right there you recite “Om Vajra Sattva Hum” and say those verses sincerely, feeling the presence of Guru Vajrasattva. Feel that not only the mistake is purified but also you help the victim to whom you accidentally caused harm.

On top of that, if the broken Samaya or the karma created is in relation to the Guru, one of the specific ways of purifying, besides Samayavarja is confessing to the Guru of having broken the Samaya and then ask for forgiveness if the Guru is alive, it is very important.

If not, then you can also ask forgiveness from one of the closest disciples, even the attendants, or in front of certain holy objects, like statues or pictures of the Guru, the mala or vajra or bell of the Guru, texts held by the Guru. Or you can visit the Guru’s mandala or shrine, and there you do three prostrations, kneel down and ask forgiveness to keep intact the Samaya with the Guru, which is the most important.

Even the slightest of broken samaya with the Guru will become a huge obstacle in our spiritual path.

But, when the Samaya to the Guru is pure then everything becomes so easy, life becomes so meaningful, spiritual life or any practice becomes so easy, actualizing realizations becomes so easy, any form of accumulation of merits becomes so vast, extensive. With a pure intact Guru Samaya then, you will have the awareness and mindfulness of integrating all the practices into Guru Yoga practice which makes all the practice more effective and beneficial.

If it is negative in relation to **individual liberation vows**, like refuge, lay vows, committing 10 non-virtues actions, one should refresh the refuge and together refresh the lay vows, minimum three times a day and three times at night. Otherwise as much as possible.

If it is individual liberation vows in relation to Sangha, if you are pre-ordained Sangha then you purify through your ordination abbot. If it is in relation to novice or fully ordained Sangha, that must be purified within the Sangha community in the presence of minimum 4 fully ordained Sanghas, the more the better.

Then, **Bodhisattva vows**, you need to purify by retaking the Bodhisattva vows from the Guru, during initiations or separately, or you retake Bodhisattva vows in front of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas’ holy objects, or visualizing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas’ holy objects.

In relation to **Tantric vows**, you retake them through initiations, in the presence of the Guru, or in six-session Guru Yoga practice, Guru Puja practice.

Then, if you take the **8 Mahayana precepts**, you confess through Vajrasattva practice, but instead of reciting “Vajrasattva” in the mantra, you recite “Pemasattva”, the lotus. You can use the mantra of pure morality and recite it twenty-one times:

*OM AMOGHA SHILA SAMBHARA [SAMBHARA] / BHARA BHARA / MAHA SHUDDHA SATTVA
PADMA VIBHUSHITA BHUJA / DHARA DHARA SAMANTA / AVALOKITE HUM PHAT SVAHA (21x)*

It is good to recite it whenever we have free time, because we may not know when we will be limiting the precepts to keep 24/24 the Samaya very purely.

Then, those of you who have initiations, you have **daily sadhana or commitments**. There is possibility of not doing them correctly, doing mistakes, limitations that need to be purified. As mentioned before, we cannot take lightly any limitation. If you are doing Yamantaka sadhana, there is a section with the mantra “Om Yamantaka Samaya”, then you can take the occasion to do a Yamantaka Vajrasattva purification. You can do similarly with Heruka. It is Vajrasattva in many manifestations designed to purify specific limitations that happened in specific practices.

- **Limb of Rejoicing**

I rejoice in all the merit, whatever it may be, 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.

Those are the five kinds of beings (the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, Sravakabuddhas, Ordinary sentient beings) to rejoice not only in the merits you created but also all the merits created by the others, like all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions.

It is a huge opportunity, when you think about the benefit of rejoicing.

If you want to practice just one thing, practice rejoicing. It is one of the best ways to keep our mind 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”.

If our mind is so easy to scatter by worries, by worldly concerns, by sensual distractions, then you practice rejoicing, with your mind totally invested in rejoicing: like taking the time to rejoice to all the merits accumulated by the Buddhas in the South, in the East...one by one.

Rejoice in the merits of the 35 Buddhas, the 21 Taras. Reflect on each quality of each of the 35 Buddhas starting with Shakyamuni Buddha’s Major and Minor Marks, Buddha’s deeds. Unbelievable. Wow. 21 Taras. Take the 21 Praises and reflect on each of them. You can read the commentary. 5 Dhyani Buddhas. All the levels of Bodhisattvas’ merits. Ordinary Bodhisattvas. Pratyekabuddhas, Hearers, “Those with more to learn” are the learners who have not achieved cessation from the three paths.

Think about all the merits and qualities, including yours, fill your heart with joy, and feel happy.

That is called Rejoicing. In the Sutras it is said that rejoicing in our own merits doubles them. It is the easiest to feel happy. But we hardly do that. We are busier to think about all the negativities we did, or we may commit in the future, in the form of worries. And we hold onto past limitations we committed; you keep reminding them.

The only way we should remember them, as serious practitioners, is when we do confessions and purification practices, to remember and acknowledge them. Other than that, we should never think about them and forget about it. The first step of a Purification is forgetting them, letting them go from our grasping.

When we come to the point when we are losing the grip of grasping of holding onto past negativities or wrongdoing, that is a good sign. Our heart should be filled with Rejoicing.

It is so wonderful to remember all the retreats you did. Some people may think why I should recall. It is for rejoicing purposes. How many amazing Dharma events did you have with your Gurus? With your Dharma brothers and sisters? How many great things have you done in the temple? In Dharma centers? in the service of Guru, in the service of sentient beings? How many practices of generosity, forgiveness, acceptance, kindness to your family members?

It is good to recall them, to remember them, again and again and feel proud of yourself. You should reward yourself. Make you a nice coffee, nice tea, nice meal. Or a nice outing. Go for it. With that heart of “wow, well done”. Not only in this lifetime.

You must confirm to yourself that from beginningless lifetimes, you accumulated immense and immense of merits. The proof is your present time being born as a precious human rebirth during the time of the Compassionate Buddha manifesting in the form of Guru and be able to enjoy the Dharma, can you imagine?

This is the result of your unbelievable accumulation of merits. One lifetime is not enough to accumulate that many merits. You must have accumulated them from beginningless lifetimes. Not just from beginningless lifetimes “samsara, samsara”. Yes. When you want to purify, when you want to gain renunciation. Some people misunderstand “practicing Buddhism is so depressing, you always talk about samsara, lower Hell Realms, karma...” Yes, some particular time, particular practices require that.

But there is a lot of time when we get to think about wonderful, amazing things also. Sometimes you must imagine “wow this must be my past lifetime”. And admire yourself. I must have been the attendant, or the very close friend to this particular virtuous friend, or the Guru. I would think like this: “I must have been this very cute puppy to my Guru in my past life, that is why I get the opportunity to meet my Guru”. Just to think about that is wonderful right, this cute puppy. Or a cute human being, why not?

It is so healthy, so wonderful to have that mindset. Then, if you feel comfortable, think about it all that you have: the food, the clothes, sustainable health, friends, family...is the result of your past life, or many lifetimes. Feel proud of yourself. And rejoice about that. That will double your merits without spending much time, many efforts.

Then, people who have less vows than you, less merits than you, whoever is doing good things, you rejoice and feel happy for them. This way you will accumulate double of their merits. When you rejoice on the merits of Bodhisattvas, you will accumulate half of their merits. Unbelievable and it is so easy to feel happy about Bodhisattvas’ deeds, their way of life and virtues. So, easy compared to human beings, isn’t it?

There are numberless Bodhisattvas like Shantideva, Lama Atisha, Lama Serlingpa, Arya Nagarjuna, Bodhisattvas Manjushri, Chenrezig. When you rejoice in the Buddhas’ merits, you think about Buddha Chenrezig, when you think of Bodhisattvas, you can think about Bodhisattva Chenrezig.

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. Here, it is not said how many. It should be more. Rejoicing in anyone’s merits during a solar eclipse multiply hundred million times.

Sometimes, it sounds like “How could it be possible”? We should not have that kind of thoughts.

In order to gather all the three countless eons of merits, which is unmeasurable, some take countless eons, others take just one moment like that. That is why Buddhahood is possible within this very moment, in this very cushion, in this very lifetime. Or it can happen hundreds of million eons of lifetimes later. It all depends on the accumulation of merits.

We do not mind if it takes three great countless eons to achieve Buddhahood but also you may regard the possibility that you may achieve Buddhahood right now. So, try to accumulate as many merits as possible also this way.

Then, rejoicing during a lunar eclipse multiplies the merits seven hundred thousand times. This is the words of the Buddha. Just think of His Holiness, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, your Gurus, totally filled with selflessness, altruism Bodhisattva's ways of life. Completely in peace, in positivity. You see all those qualities in them in every breath, every move. It is so heart touching, heartwarming.

You can naturally feel so fortunate, in the expression of feelings, feel fortunate to have met this Guru, receiving his teachings, this Guru...feeling so wonderful. That is rejoicing. Naturally your heart, your life will be so filled with purpose and meaning. **Not even one moment is wasted.**

If you do whatever you do in the service of even one sentient being, you are following the advice of Shakyamuni Buddha, of the ten directions Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Gurus: even one beneficial work for one sentient being, just one ant crawling, reciting mantras or caring for them, you are following them. Even just that, one action a day, feel "how amazing I am".

Your heart can be completely filled with bliss and positivity. In the heart of that person there is no room to feel agitation, meaningless, depressed, angry, unhappy.

All of you here you are spending your whole day, dedicating your whole life in your very best in an altruistic way. The entirety of the day you are obeying, following the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas and Gurus' guidance. You are trying your very best. Unbelievable rejoicing. Life is so worth living. Whatever inconvenience that can come from Samsara, compared to the meaning of your life becomes very small.

Gradually, the way we train our mind like that, in the heart of rejoicing, then you will find no meaning in giving any focus on those unhelpful thoughts that come in your way.

You will be so forgiving, understanding to yourself. You make some mistake. Do not focus on that. You are still a sentient being, you are already doing so great. You are following your Guru's and Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' advice the best you can, 24 hours: you also go to bed like that. And some more altruistically, with altruistic intention. And if you do this mistake, how can you freak out, and pay so much attention. It is so easy to purify the mistake, to forgive yourself for that mistake. It is such a wonderful way to take care of yourself.

Don't focus on that. Yes, you have this limitation, forget it. You have such an amazing and purposeful life. Why do you focus on the moment of anger you had a few minutes ago? Let it be purified. Let go. Rejoicing is so wonderful.

- **Limb of Requesting to Turn the Wheel of Dharma**

I implore all the protectors, lights of the world in the ten directions, who have reached Buddhahood, which is without attachment, to turn the peerless wheel of the teaching.

This is so important. **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.** It turns the wheel of Dharma educating you and also causing you to realize the path in reliance on those words you read in the text, those words that you listen to.

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 (or request)**

I supplicate, with palms joined in prayer, those wishing to demonstrate their final nirvāṇa: please stay as many eons as there are atoms to benefit and bring happiness to all beings.

So, when you request to the Gurus not to pass into Parinirvana then 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. That very much is constructed by reciting the names of the Buddhas, supplications of the Deity, the Buddhas, doing sadhanas of the Deities, the aspirational prayers of the Buddhas.

- **Limb of Dedication**

Whatever little merit I have accumulated by prostrating, offering, confessing, rejoicing, requesting, and supplicating, I dedicate it all to enlightenment.

All the roots of virtue represented by the previous six limbs are made the common property of all sentient beings and never come to an end, since they have been dedicated with strong aspiration as causes of complete enlightenment.

If you thus develop an understanding of the meaning of those words and slowly do as was taught without allowing your mind to wander, you will gather immeasurable heaps of merit.

Five of these limbs — prostrating, offering, requesting, supplicating, and rejoicing — belong to the collection of accumulations. [30] Confessing purifies obstructions. One aspect of rejoicing, the cultivation of joy in one's own virtue, multiplies the virtue. By means of dedicating, the virtues

of collecting, purifying, and multiplying, however small, are multiplied manifoldly, and what would normally come to an end after producing a temporary effect is made inexhaustible.

So, the dedication is as equally important as the motivation because it fulfills the three purposes:

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

By dedicating in Bodhicitta and Emptiness:

- If anger arises or anything negative, **all the merits you have been accumulated and dedicated will not be destroyed and remain forever 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 achieved 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.**

That will turn into the perfected merit of wisdom as Buddha's wisdom body, all pervasive forever existent, forever beneficial. **The inexhaustible merit of method eventually will become Buddha's form body forever living; every single method benefiting the rest of the living beings.**

Even after the entire sentient beings achieve enlightenment, they will live in complete perfect virtues, because of multiplying, purifying, accumulating, they will become inexhaustible.

The practice of rejoicing also carries certain elements of the practice of dedicating such as accumulating. By rejoicing it also prevents the obstacles to consume the merits. By rejoicing, it will multiply the merits until achieving the perfected enlightened qualities and become inexhaustible too.

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

Sixth, as for the final preparatory practice, with a clear visualization of the objects, offer a maṇḍala, and with strong aspiration, make numerous requests: "Please grant blessings that all erroneous attitudes such as disrespecting the spiritual teacher may cease and that all the nonerroneous attitudes toward the spiritual teacher may come about with ease. I request blessings that all outer and inner obstacles may be pacified."

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

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 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.

C. Preliminary prayers

After the preliminary practices, come the preliminary prayers and the setting up of the Bodhicitta motivation: **Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer, 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.

You can find the Gandan Lha Gyalma sadhana and description of the visualization later in this booklet.

- 1. Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta**
- 2. Four Immeasurable Prayer**

You might want to use the longest version in relation to the Guru Yoga practice as at the end you request the blessings of the Guru deity to achieve the realizations of each of those immeasurable thoughts.

- 3. Generating special Bodhicitta**
- 4. Purifying the place**

To purify the place, the retreat environment, the implements, the offerings, the resources (food, water, air) if there are any impure substances (in particular contaminated from wrong livelihood even the tangka if channeled by any wrong livelihood of others, that would clarify any obstacles to your practice).

At the time of Buddha, Buddha's disciples and attendants were using this prayer to purify everything before Buddha's arrival, even the disciples (broken samaya), the air... so that everything became conducive for the Buddha to shower the nectar of the Dharma.

This way whenever Buddhas was teachings everybody and everything was pure vessels to receive the Dharma and for the Dharma to be the antidote to our samsara.

You can also engage in Gektor practice to dispel any kind of hindrance: a ritual torma offering to the interferers. Usually, you need someone that knows how to conduct the ritual to help you to do that.

If you do not or do not know how to do the practice those 4 lines prayers will be enough.

So, it is very beneficial. It is always beneficial to do any Dharma practice (or studies) with a pure heart. That prayer can fully ripen you to get the full benefit of the sadhana or teaching.

5. Offering prayer

Hold your vajra with your right hand in front of your chest pointing out and the bell with your left hand at the level of your heart while reciting (cf. picture below) and ring the bell while reciting the prayers.



6. Actual Visualization of Lama Tsongkhapa and the merit field

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) symbolizing Buddha's eight sovereign qualities. The snow lions are transformations of great bodhisattvas and are visualized alive and made of light.

On the throne there is a white and colorful eight petals lotus (symbolizing renunciation) and on the lotus are the sun (symbolizing the wisdom of emptiness) and moon (symbolizing Bodhicitta) disks, cushions of light for Guru Lama Tsongkhapa who is seated upon them.

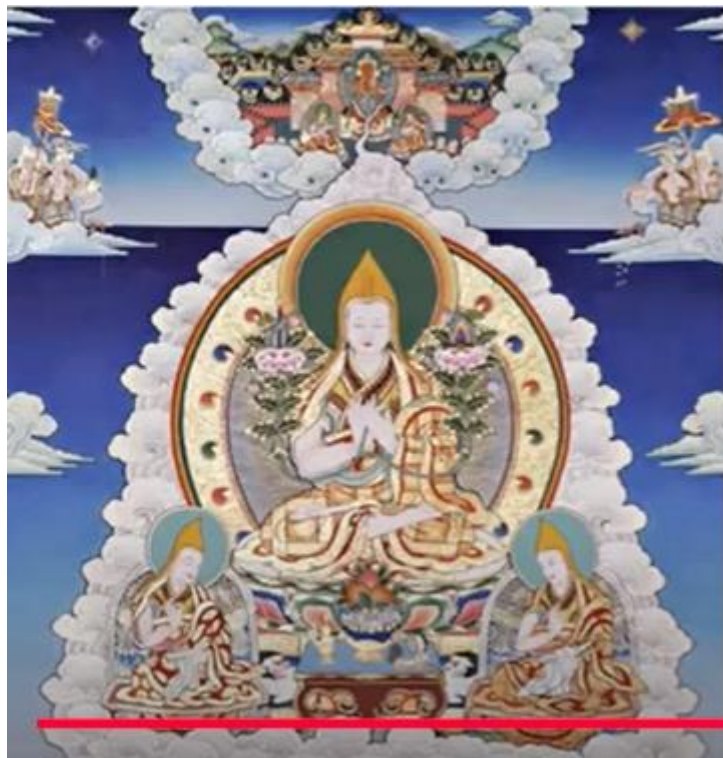
Those three symbols indicate that the Lama sitting on this throne embodies the three principal aspects of the path.

Uncommon symbolism:

- **Lotus symbolizing clear light**
- **Sun: the illusory body**
- **Moon: nondual attainment of the Buddha's form and wisdom body.**

Reflect on that will enable you to leave imprints in our continuum with the awareness of your mind being one with your Root Guru who appears to us as Lama Tsongkhapa. Guru Lama Tsongkhapa is the embodiment of all the Buddhas of the three times descending in a human form to guide us.

Lama Tsongkhapa is looking directly at you, very pleased of you engaging in the practice.



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

His hands are in the mudras of turning the wheel of Dharma, the two hands symbolizing the inseparability of the two truths, the wisdom of dependent arising and emptiness. We can see both the palm and the back of the hand, the two faces of one hand: as the two truths, the two wisdoms, they are two aspects, interpretations of one entity. The meaning of emptiness is dependent arising, and the meaning of dependent arising is emptiness.

It is also the inseparability of sutra and tantra as Lama Tsongkhapa clarified the misconceptions around the practice of Tantra, upholding his whole life the Vinaya precepts of a fully ordained monk and at the same holding the essence of the practice of Tantra as his heart practice.

It also symbolizes that Lama Tsongkhapa is always liberating numberless beings on the path to liberation from the ocean of Samsara by giving dharma teachings by his great love and compassion.

At his right shoulder, adorned with a Lotus, there is a wisdom sword representing the profound Dharma and at the left wisdom sutra representing the extensive Dharma.

The sword is Manjushri's sword symbolizing Lama Tsongkhapa being oneness with Manjushri, as well as the sharpest wisdom of Lama Tongkhapa. It indicates someone who achieved a direct realization of emptiness. Just seeing the sharpness of the sword cuts off the ignorance grasping in our heart and dispel obstacles.

The lotus on the left contains at his heart the 80.000 verses of the Prajnaparamita Sutra associated with an echo filling the whole space (including our ears senses) making us only hear the Prajnaparamita Sutra. Without any delay we are directly awakened into a direct realization of emptiness.

An aura of light is surrounding his whole body. Happening uninterruptedly, live transmissions of complete dharma nectar, Lamrim, attended by his heart disciples like Gyaltsab-Je (more senior aspect) and Khedrup-Je (younger and wrathful aspect), and numberless fortunate ripen disciples including yourself.

Feel your heart is totally subdued to Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples. Their vision dispels all misconceptions.

Maitreya's Pure Land is far more beautiful than any landscape in the world. Then, in the middle a huge pagoda which is a teaching shrine where Maitreya Buddha does not have even a moment of pause.

Maitreya's position is ever ready to descend to the Southern world to succeed in Shakyamuni Buddha's legacy. When the end of the era of the degenerated times (which is the time of Shakyamuni Buddha turning the wheel of Dharma) will come, then Maitreya will come and proclaim the Dharma.

This practice helps to create the karma to be reborn as Maitreya first disciple when Lord Maitreya will turn the wheel of Dharma. Another practice is building statues of Maitreya, making Tsatsas or paintings of Maitreya...

Lama Tsongkhapa is descending from Tushita and getting bigger and bigger, the clouds of Bodhicitta extend, who can now see the whole Lama Tsongkhapa's mandala in front of you.

On the crown of Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples there is a Om, on their throats a Ha, on their heart a Hum, on their navels a SO, at the secret point between anus and genitals HA. It is the mantra of the five Dhyani Buddhas.

From the seed syllables of this mantra, emanates infinite light rays towards the ten directions showering all sentient beings, including you. They also reach the Pure Realms, including Maitreya Pure Land and the celestial there.

From there all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas' blessings absorb into Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples. From there, the light rays bring all the benefits to you and the rest of the sentient beings.

That creates the conditions for Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples to bring active benefit to purify you and accumulate the two eons of the types of merits, when you will engage into the seven Limbs practice which comes after.

For some it may be difficult to do the whole visualization or for others to visualize being that close to Lama Tsongkhapa; others can see them close yet not clear or seeing them lively and not "just" as a representation like a picture, all due to karmic obscurations.

Whenever you have some difficulty, reinforce the visualization of the 5 syllables mantra and relight the light rays from those seed syllables, that will help purify the karma.

Also, if during the retreat you start to notice some arising of delusions, laziness, any physical or mental sicknesses, any obstacle in the retreat environment (like wars, famine...), you can do the same visualization with the same focus (as everything is a ripening of our karma, therefore we need to purify it).

7. Invocation Prayer

Hold the dorje and bell in the same way than for the offering prayers.

The savior here is referring to Maitreya, the future Buddha, the main teacher of Tushita.

"Hundred" is just expression of "many". There are infinite teachers there. Tushita is somewhere above the 33 Gods Realms: on the center there is Mont Meru and, on the peak, the 33 Gods Realms.

The reason why **Lama Tsongkhapa is descending from Maitreya's heart (cloud = infinite Bodhicitta)** is because Lama Tsongkhapa's reincarnation is residing in Tushita heaven and Lama Tsongkhapa is also regarded as Maitreya's emanation. Two different entities but one in essence.

Lama Tsongkhapa is regarded as the King of the Dharma. Scholarly speaking he is the crown jewel of the snow mountains. He conquered all the scholars from all other traditions, all the Yanas. He achieved enlightenment/omniscience in one lifetime. He expanded the unmistakable profound meaning of Nagarjuna's teaching on emptiness.

By doing so you are inviting the merit field.

8. Seven-Limbs Prayer

This practice depending on the sadhana can come in a different order. Here, it starts with the 1st Limb: **Request to remain for a long time** (for the whole merit field).

You reinforce the previous visualization. You can visualize the size of a thumb to work on your concentration abilities or as big as possible to expand the merits to actualize the conducive conditions for the success of your practice.

You can alternate both during the retreat for full benefit.

Your Guru is oneness with Lama Tsongkhapa and is perfected in all the good qualities emphasized by Maitreya in the Mahayana Sutra. If you are doing this practice, many of you may already be practicing Tantra, maybe not Highest Yoga Tantra, but the lower schools of Tantra. So, you already have a living human Guru.

That Guru is perfected in all the qualities. Guru is kind in the three times: you meet this Guru in this life based on your merits and practice in your previous life. Then the Guru's commitment in this life is to always be with you, so you will meet the next life, ever lifetime Guru.

Kind in three times also because at your side guiding you during your life and at the time of death (clear light, intermediate state). With a solid practice of Guru yoga without any pause during the whole day and night, then the death process and the experience of clear light is the best opportunity to actualize the path.

It is the practice of the Guru Yoga of transferring consciousness. There is nothing other than having the Guru Yoga within your heart. That habitual mindfulness will help during the clear light you will recognize that is Dharmakaya, that is Guru's Dharmakaya and merge that with your own basis, the clear light, the Dharmakaya.

In case you will not achieve enlightenment during the clear light Guru will also guide you during the intermediate state to facilitate your journey there.

The Guru is also perfect Guru because **kind in three ways** providing you:

- precepts,
- granting you commentaries, oral transmissions,
- and initiations.

Guru is “delighted” to see you. Even if it is so hard to have pure Dharma practice, Guru is so delighted to see us engaging in this uncommon Ngöndro practice. For eons of lifetime, we stayed unripen. Now, we are putting so much effort into practicing the four major Ngöndros.

Living in the practice is the way to please the Guru, the Buddhas, Lama Tsongkhapa. The best offering.

Nowadays it is not easy to meet with our Guru. But with this practice we get to meet with our Guru every day. Every day we are comforted, nurtured, inspired by simply looking at the Guru's picture.

Close your eyes and recite by having all that in mind, reflect on the richness and comfort of this relationship. It is the best holiday, the best break, so blissful.

“Supreme field of merit” because it is the Guru, and because the purification and accumulation of merits that takes place here is in relation to the Guru. It surpasses all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Guru is the most powerful object to purify and accumulate merits.

You can accompany your recitation and visualization by **prostrating with your hands, bowing and visualizing you are emanating countless versions of you** representing all your past and

future reincarnations. Your reincarnations are in all their realms of reincarnations, but in a human form carrying the same genuine faith and conviction and understanding, with you as a leader.

Each one of you is holding crossed vajras, or golden thrones, or Mount Meru of piles of cushions, or Digwa (red cover that ordained sanghas put on their cushion), to create the causes and conditions for your Guru to remain and have a long life (very auspicious to offer that to the Guru, one of the best offering you can make to your Guru for long life).

You request your Guru to stay for hundreds of eons.

For the **Limbs of prostrations (2nd)**, you emanate in countless versions of you and express the qualities of the omniscient mind and of the two truths which can only be realized by an enlightened mind.

You also **reflect on the meaning of Guru's and Buddha's omniscient qualities** (11 perfections, 6 perfections, 5 wisdoms, 5 concentrations, 8 powers) which are **the omniscient wisdom and omniscient attitude**.

It is so beneficial to purify our mind and develop and perfect our Guru devotion in relation to our human Guru. Because of our limitations, we can reflect our flaws in the Guru. With this practice we reflect Lama Tsongkhapa enlightened qualities to the Guru (because of the oneness Guru/Lama Tsongkhapa). Then when you are meeting with the Guru again, no more flaws.

There are 60 melodious effective speech that Buddha carries which are so effective to spread Buddha's teachings. For example, for the listener, hearing the Dharma will become a true healing, like the first disciples hearing the 1st wheel of Dharma, they receive healing, and they all received all according to their mental dispositions. We need to cleanse our negativity that prevents us from listening to Dharma with the same effectiveness as those disciples.

"Glorious renowned" because he purposely chose to live his whole life perfectly upholding all the precepts of a fully ordained monk instead of transgressing them to practice Tantra and enlightened in the intermediate state. His body is a golden body literally because he is totally pure, perfected in all vows (Vinaya included) and all three baskets.

In order to relate with the students, outwardly, the qualities of the Guru's speech must be greater than the qualities of the Guru's mind. Then, the qualities of the Guru's body are greater than the earlier two. Of course, inwardly, the heart is number one, than the speech, than the body.

But for the disciple's benefit, the Guru's body must be the first and on and on. **That is why the kindness of the Guru who manifests in an ordinary form surpasses the kindness of all the three times Buddhas. Because of the physical appearances to you.**

How fortunate we are just to have met the Guru.

If you can, you can do physical prostrations and integrate the multiplying prostrations mantra or 35 Buddhas, or Namu Gurubhya, or Lama la Kyab Su Chhi O... as explained (cf. earlier preliminary practices heading).

Limbs of offerings (3rd)

Limbs of confession (4th)

Here in relation to Guru Yoga practice, just by practicing it you can purify the transgression. Here, the most important opponent power is remorse. In relation to the Guru Yoga practice, you

can take the Guru as the object of refuge, then, the Guru Yoga practice, the oneness in particular here, will be the antidote.

Limbs of rejoicing (5th)

Limbs of requesting to turn the wheel of Dharma (6th)

Visualization of you and your numberless reincarnations and all the rest of the sentient beings in human form holding Dharmachakra in your hands (Dharmachakra as huge as possible) made from the purest gold, silver, diamond, precious gems.

Remember how Brahma blow the conch shell and offered Dharmachakra while Shakyamuni Buddha was in retreat, then you visualize you and all the others doing the same in the loudest sound filling the whole universe, causing the Guru to turn the wheel of Dharma and liberate the numberless sentient beings.

Guru accepts right in front of you and is delightful.

If the Guru stops turning the wheel of Dharma, it is like being abandoned by our parents while we are still immature. That is why it is one of the most important practices in Buddhist teachings.

Whenever you are meeting with Guru, one thing you need to do is to always request Guru to turn the wheel of Dharma until the end of Samsara. It creates so much auspiciousness. Instead of giving chocolates, offer Guru a Dharmachakra. And offering kata is so meaningful because there is a conch shell and a Dharma wheel.

Limbs of dedication (7th)

Dedicate all the merits of all beings to be the cause of the essence of Losang Dragpa teachings to shine forever in every sentient being until the last being to actualize enlightenment.

9. Mandala Offering

After conducting the 7 Limbs practice/Guru Yoga (whose main goal is achieving the two main purposes of the path: purification and accumulation of merits), **we do the mandala offering here as a thanksgiving mandala to Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples, as they are those very important objects of our practice of Guru Yoga and fulfilling our wishes and aspirations.**

Of course, you can express gratitude in many ways but through the mandala offering, it is one of the most extensive ways: using the mandala base, all those benefits will be actualized (as commented in the booklet of the Ngöndro dedicated to the mandala offering).

You actualize all existence as a wish-fulfilling jewel, nectar, all the goodness. You create through your pure heart Buddha's land and assemble the whole of it in the mandala offering.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche assembled this text and added the complementary verses and the following notes ("due to the merits of having offered...") to make our practice even more meritorious.

Some practitioners may extend the practice before reciting "Idam...":

- **by offering their body, speech and mind**, because it is such a powerful practice dedicated to the Merit field being your Guru in oneness with your Lama Tsongkhapa and

his two disciples, to release our heart and purify it from the bondage of the self-grasping, material things, your family members etc (especially when we transit from this life to another)

- **the three partial attitudes and the objects of those** (loved ones, strangers, enemies) to purify those and the karma created in relation to them

You will find some prayers in the Fpmt book (or in the mandala offering booklet).

10. Glimpse meditation on the Lam-Rim: the foundation of all good qualities

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

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

It is regarded as extremely beneficial to accomplish the imprints of the entire path (the whole path in such a short period of time), in particular in relation to Lama Tsongkhapa (as our merit field), who is the authority of the text itself (the small Lam Rim) and at the same time the object of the Guru Yoga practice.

That creates the practitioner to actualize Lam Rim realizations so effectively and quickly.

If we are able to live a life like that, no doubt our subconscious will remember the whole Lam Rim at the time of death, because it brings such an impact in our heart.

In the visualization, the cloud on which Lama Tsongkhapa is descending from Maitreya Heart is still connected to Maitreya.

So, when you absorb the Merit field in your heart, the thread of the cloud stays connected to Maitreya: it creates the causes to be reborn in Tushita Pure Land where you will be tutored by Lord Maitreya and Lama Tsongkhapa themselves.

NB: You would start the accumulation at this point if you chose to use the Ganden Lha Gyalma.

You will find the specificities in relation to the different types of Ngöndros accumulation in each of the chapter dedicated to the specific Ngöndro.

III. Refuge practice – Refuge and Bodhicitta practice: the different prayers

A. Worldly refuge and Dharma refuge

1. Worldly refuge

There are different types of refuge based on different purposes, the main body practice, the commitments, etc.

There is worldly refuge and beyond worldly refuge (which is the Dharma refuge). Whenever there is a need for help or protection in relation to wealth, health, fear, status, you will look for a worldly refuge: material possessions, or an ordinary human being, ordination information, and then worldly gods. Also, animals, like Nagas, landlords, spirits.

Fear as well as faith and reliance on material power, individual people, Nagas, gods... are the cause for worldly refuge.

Some so-called Buddhists practitioners because they did not access to the actual teachings of the Buddha, do not know exactly the actual Dharma way to the refuge practice and they seriously take refuge in gods, humans, spirits.

They are plenty in Tibetan culture, Thai, Sri Lankan, Chinese, everywhere.

When someone who had taken refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, but continue to practice worldly refuge, this is a huge flaw because they did not manage to fulfil the ultimate purpose of taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and therefore, did not manage to take the full power of the Dharma refuge.

Therefore, one received limited protection, limited refuge only. This refuge is very temporary within this very lifetime.

All the qualities the gods have, Buddha already has them in a perfected way. So, when you take refuge in the gods, it is a sign that you do not trust, you do not have taken the full refuge in Buddha, you show limitations in your belief and trust in Buddha's abilities.

But it does not mean that since you are a Buddhist, you only show respect to Buddha and not to the gods or the other religions.

When you go for refuge, you need to have 100% conviction in the objects of refuge's abilities, the enlightened abilities.

The maximum level of achievements of those gods are the highest level of samsaric achievements. They bring immense benefits, but they also have their objectives and ultimate goal, which is not full enlightenment. Their ultimate goal is the highest of goodness of the three worlds they come from.

Liberation and full enlightenment are beyond those three worlds.

They can guide you all the way up to highest pick of the 33 gods realms qualities. But if you wish to go further then they cannot provide you any guidance. There is a possibility of diverting your purpose (if your purpose is to achieve full enlightenment).

So, if your purpose is to achieve liberation or full enlightenment, then no offence but the object of refuge is Buddha. Again, no offence, the teachings they share have infinite benefits to their followers.

2. The refuge of the small capable beings' path

The objects of refuge are Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to overcome the fears and limitations of the three lower Realms and have a protection to achieve higher rebirths in the human, demi-gods or gods' realms, having the conviction, faith, reliance of the power and ability of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha to do so.

The duration is just within the period of two lifetimes.

3. The refuge of the middle capable beings' path

Within that one, there are two categories of practitioners: the Hearers and the Solitary Realizers practitioners, or Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas.

Their objects of refuge are Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.

For the Hearers, their main refuge is the Sangha members, the monastics, the Elders, the teachers. Their objective is to achieve the Sravakas' liberation, the self-liberation.

Their motive is the fear of the others' powers control of karma and delusions and the fear of falling into the six realms of cyclic existence. They have faith, conviction and reliance in the three jewels,

but mainly, the Sangha community, especially the Elders, the teachers to discipline them through virtuous accumulation and restrict them from committing non virtuous, then stages by stages to lead them to the achieve Arhatship of the Sravakas path.

They get liberated by hearing the instructions of the sangha or Elders.

Then, the refuge in relation to Pratyekabuddhas: the main object of refuge is the Dharma: the truth of the path and the truth of cessation. Their ultimate goal is to achieve Pratyekabuddhas self-liberation.

The main causes of the refuge are again two: the fear of the others' powers control of karma and delusions and their consequences in the six realms of cyclic existence. They have faith, conviction and reliance in the three jewels, but mainly in the two aspects of the path (truth of the path and truth of cessation).

4. The refuge of the higher capable beings' path: the Mahayana practitioners

There are Mahayana Sutrayana practitioners and Mahayana Trantrayana practitioners. They are the same. The differences are in the **time needed to complete the path and the subtlety of their reliance.** Ultimately, they are the same.

They take refuge in the three jewels, but mainly in the Buddha.

When we talk about Buddha, we need to understand either the two bodies of the Buddha, or the three, or the four.

They take refuge in the Buddha because they see the highest level of cessation, which are the bodies of the Buddha.

When you interpret into two bodies, you have the form body and the wisdom body. The wisdom body is the highest and complete knowledge and the cessation and the achievement for your own benefit. Form body is the highest and most beneficial body of the Buddha for the benefit of all the other sentient beings.

The highest level of skillful means, the highest qualities which is the truth body to be in the service of sentient beings is the Buddha form body. So, **you achieve the wisdom body for your own benefit as a result of the second aspiration you made when you generated Bodhicitta, when you first enter the Mahayana path ("may I achieve the state of full enlightenment"). The form body is the result of the first aspiration you made ("for the numberless sentient beings' enlightenment").**

Then, you can interpret with the three bodies of the Buddha: Dharmakaya, Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya.

If you refer to the four bodies, then the wisdom body has two bodies: the wisdom body and the ultimate nature of the wisdom which is emptiness body. The wisdom body is the final perfected wisdom of the Buddha. The ultimate nature of wisdom is the final cessation by overcoming all the defilements and obscurations. Those two bodies are two wisdom bodies. Then, there are the two form bodies: the Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya form bodies.

The first aspiration delivers the form body, the second aspiration delivers the wisdom body. You take refuge in Buddha's wisdom body by seeing the perfections of the wisdom by overcoming all the flaws not just of karma and delusions, of Samsara, but also the flaws of Nirvana.

You gain the full ultimate trust and conviction in its ultimate ability and that is how you take refuge in Buddha because of Buddha is adorned with the perfected quality of being a refuge for you, because of the Dharmakaya quality.

Then, you go for refuge in Sambhogakaya because you have accomplished all the merits of the method and achieved the omniscient capability to be able to understand every single mental disposition of numberless sentient beings and adorn the most perfected attitude, the highest level of the qualities of the attitude, the omniscient altruism.

Because of that, I go for refuge in the Buddha. There is no limitation in his attitude who overcomes even the limitations attached to the Nirvana peace, which only carries the concern of your own perfection, not the perfection of others.

Even your own limitation is not fully perfected because you have not achieved the highest level of cessation. **Therefore, the Bodhisattvas go for refuge in the example of the Buddha who is the highest level of wisdom and attitude.**

Then, the Bodhisattvas go for refuge in the Nirmanakaya, which they see as the all-pervasive blessing, the highest tools of skillful means, which not only is able to reach all the Buddhas, but also is able to reach the higher level of beings like the Arya Bodhisattvas, the Sambhogakaya Buddhas, as well as the least meritorious beings, the most ordinary beings, the lowest level of living beings.

The Nirmanakaya body of the Buddha carries that blessing, the skillful mean, by accomplishing all the most extended levels of meritorious aspirations that the Buddhas themselves accumulated from beginningless lifetimes.

For example, why Shakyamuni Buddha among the thousand fortunate Buddhas descended in the Southern world? It is because, unlike the other Buddhas, Shakyamuni Buddha, when he was training on the path, he made the aspiration not only to accumulate merits of method and wisdom, but also to descend to turn the wheel of Dharma and liberate us when it will be the five degenerated time.

And to perform that display, just having a Dharmakaya body is not enough, just having a Sambhogakaya is not enough, you need to have the Nirmanakaya capability. It does not mean that Dharmakaya is lacking the entire enlightened capability, but because of the interdependent conditions required established by Buddha himself during his training, the Nirmanakaya has special capabilities.

Why when we have health issues, do we specifically pray Medicine Buddha? It is because of the power of their aspirations during the training. In the same way, Tara is good for activities. Manjushri is good for wisdom. They are all Buddhas, but because of that third quality, the aspirations they made when they were ordinary like us.

So here, you too, whatever aspirations you make, when you get enlightened, the impact to the sentient beings will be displayed differently as a result. So, therefore, when we have the environment of so many Buddhas, initiations, sadhanas, lineages available, you try to grab as much Dharma as possible and put that as an aspiration, so that when you become Buddha and turn the wheel of Dharma you have this numberless skillful means, numberless ways of reaching out.

The cause of the refuge is great compassion and the fear of the limitations of karma and delusions, Samsara, the three lower realms, and Nirvana, of diverting your spiritual journey towards only self-benefit Nirvana for yourself but also all the rest of the sentient beings.

The power of wisdom will be boosted by Bodhicitta as the main motivator, as a back support in order to reach Buddhahood. **The Mahayana path, and the refuge that goes with it, is the only way to reach there.**

It is good to know that though in the refuge booklet it is said, you take refuge for one lifetime (the refuge for the small cope beings); **when you take the Mahayanic refuge and the Tantric refuge, you take refuge for this life and all the future ones until you reach enlightenment.**

So, it will protect you from being reborn in the three lower realms not only for your next life, but all lifetimes because of the inexhaustible fruit of the merits born from Bodhicitta. The merit is ever growing and not degenerating, because your aspirations reach all sentient beings thanks to Bodhicitta.

5. **The refuge in Tantrayana**

The object of refuge for Tantra is the deity such as Buddha Vajradhara who is the three in one: the deity, the Buddha and the Guru; or any form of Yidam, meditational deity you are practicing, with the understanding that the main object of refuge are the two stages of the path: the generation and completion stages of the path.

Their tools will deliver the swiftest transformation in the practice of the spiritual journey. That is how one lifetime enlightenment is possible, in comparison to the sutric path where you need to accumulate three great countless eons of merits in three great countless eons of times.

It is a long journey.

Not even the earlier schools of Tantra carry this capability, even though they also carry the one lifetime enlightenment blessings, tools and path, but not in one brief lifetime.

Only the Highest Yoga Tantra can. Even on this very cushion, you can achieve enlightenment.

It is not time, but your practice, faith, consistency, diligence and the blessings through the deity yoga practice, that which gives you the access to actualize the generation and completion stages of the Tantric path.

The cause of refuge is the urgency: you cannot even bear even one moment to delay the benefits of the three bodies of the Buddha towards all the sentient beings. Therefore, you take refuge in the subtlest and swiftest path to actualize the resultant refuge.

Going into refuge (in causal refuge) and achieving those objectives (Buddhahood) is called the resultant refuge.

B. The objects of the Dharma refuge

1. Taking refuge in Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha who are free from any limitation

When we recite the refuge prayer, we can refresh our refuge practice in Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and also acknowledge Buddha nature as one's innate nature, one's own true being.

And place confidence in the fact that, this Buddha nature will one day be fully awakened as a resultant Buddha, which is the ultimate refuge, through the cultivation of the path and the precepts.

Then, understand you have gone under the refuge of Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, because Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha **are the straightforward quality free from all the limitations.**

These are the straightforward qualities:

- which accomplished **all the perfections**, all the goodness, all the virtuous qualities,
- which has **all the wisdoms**, all the skillful means,
- and most of all, has **omniscient wisdom**, which directly understands the entirety of one's past, present and future, including of the subtle karmas, mental dispositions, whose compassion, love, blessings, is all pervasive, without any bias. All pervasive.

Because of that reason, we go for refuge to that ultimate refuge without a doubt that it will cause our total purification of our own limitations and conditions us **to actualize the same achievements than Buddha** himself.

That is the reason why one took refuge in Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and the qualities of immeasurable love, compassion, blessings, omniscient wisdom. These qualities are the most inspiring qualities, the most inspiring virtues.

2. Setting a Bodhicitta motivation with the four immeasurable thoughts, the very purpose of one's life

You truly aspire to actualize them **for your own ultimate benefit, as well as the ultimate benefit of the rest of the sentient beings; as well as your temporary benefit**, the benefit of this mundane life of this very lifetime, for the benefit of this very moment; **as well as bringing a secure, positive, beneficial environment to the others**, starting with the person who is sitting next to you that fly that keeps flying all over your face, and the ants which are crawling everywhere.

That is what you aspire for. And thinking about these boundless immeasurable qualities of the Guru Buddha is so inspiring. **It is truly heart-touching.**

Therefore, the very purpose of life, the very purpose of existence and the very purpose of this retreat, of this right very moment is to actualize that benefit.

On that basis, you set firm, correct, most beneficial motivation now through the guidance of the four immeasurable thoughts, you express that from the depth of one's heart, wholeheartedly, sincerely. **You generate Bodhicitta motivation in that way.**

3. Remember that Shakyamuni Buddha is kinder than all the three times Buddhas (let's remember all that he went through specifically for us and let's 100% practice)

Among the thousand fortunate Buddhas who will come into our world, the Southern world, for us, the people of the five degenerated times, **not all Buddhas will teach the complete path.**

Shakyamuni Buddha provides the complete Dharma, which is uncommon, special, compared to those thousand fortunate Buddhas who are going to display similar kinds of deeds, coming to this Southern world to turn the wheel of Dharma.

Most of the Buddhas, 997 Buddhas, will not teach the complete teachings of both Sutra and Tantra.

Most of the Buddhas will only reveal the Sutric teachings, not because there are limitations in those Buddhas in their omniscient capabilities. It is because of their karmic connections with the sentient beings of that time and era, **in relation to the aspiration that the Buddhas themselves made when they were on the path of training.**

Shakyamuni Buddha, countless eons of lifetime before becoming a Buddha, when he was just similar like us, even from the very first time when he was as a beggar, when Buddha passed by Him, even though he had nothing to offer, whatever food he had been given by others, He offered it to the Buddha.

He rejoiced in Buddha's qualities and made this aspiration: **"May I be just like Him and may I come to the world during the five degenerated times"**.

Among all the different times, he chose to be back during the most distracting time, in the most distorted world, when not only intelligence is degenerating, but also the lifespan is degenerating, even the delusions become more stubborn, and environmentally there are so many distractions.

a. In those degenerated times, it is so hard to understand the Dharma and take it as personal instruction

One of the most tragic times. **It is so hard to help. Even if you provide help by teaching Dharma, it is so difficult to understand:**

- Firstly, it is so difficult to even meet the Dharma.
- Secondly, it is so difficult to be inspired by the Dharma.
- Thirdly, it is so difficult to understand Dharma, even if you learn it.
- Finally, even if you understand, it is so difficult to understand as an instruction to yourselves.

You always listen to the Dharma thinking this teaching is for somebody else, not for me, seeing limitations in that somebody, **thinking this Dharma is an antidote for that somebody, instead of seeing this limitation is within me and this teaching is for me.**

This human intelligence becomes so corrupted that the smartness of the intelligence interprets everything in a hallucinated way or wrongly, with a lot of misinterpretations, **even when you are actually hearing a profound and a correct nectar of the Dharma directed at you.** That kind of position.

b. Shakyamuni Buddha got enlightened specifically for us (karmic connection)

So, in short, **that very lineage, that very first reincarnation of Shakyamuni Buddha,** who first time aspired with all his heart in bodhicitta, in particularly dedicated to the beings of the five degenerated times like us; from that point of you Shakyamuni Buddha is **extremely closely connected to us.**

He achieved enlightenment for us, specifically for us, for each and every one of us.

And on top of that, **there are so many Buddhas who remained in Dharmakaya. They do not openly illustrate in the Nirmanakaya form as Shakyamuni Buddha,** which is more accessible to the ordinary beings, more accessible to the limited merits, people like me.

c. Benefitting us in the three kayas forms and in the Guru form

So, Buddha is not only benefiting and inspiring from the Dharmakaya existence; but he also manifested in the form bodies:

- **In Sambhogakaya form** who resides within the Bodhisattvas realms and extensively turns the wheel of Dharma,
- and at the same time manifests in the **Nirmanakaya form** of the Buddha, such as the historical Shakyamuni Buddha.

Then, on top of that, **he manifests into a Guru form**, in the most ordinary aspect, with whom, even us, we can directly engage in face-to-face conversations.

We are able to enjoy the Dharma directly without needing to go through any other channels, with direct transmissions. **The Guru manifests at the same level as us, conventionally, so we do not feel too much of differences in every level.**

Through the heart of compassion, and the aspirations that he made, he even manifests that way.

So, Shakyamuni Buddha is not only special and kinder than all the rest of the three times Buddhas, but also special and kinder in relation to the karmic connection even among the thousand fortunate Buddhas.

d. A life of renunciation and hardships to benefit us

So, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha for countless eons of lifetimes, worked for us, for each and every one of us.

He observed all the precepts, accumulated and accomplish three countless great eons of merits then brought about all the benefits of the Dharma that we are enjoying, the nectar.

From that very first reincarnation [that beggar], and then for numberless lifetimes [some of the reincarnations are highlighted in Jakarta tales: five hundreds fortunate lives of Shakyamuni Buddha, five hundreds unfortunate lives reincarnations of Shakyamuni Buddha] throughout his journey on the Bodhisattva path, **it is all started from that one aspiration “may I be just like the Buddha, may I be just like you the Buddha and be able to bring benefit to all the sentient beings”.**

It started from there, then he worked life after life.

We can read the deeds of those lives and learn how many sacrifices he made, how he renounced his own comfort, and how many dedications in virtue he did, just for that one purpose.

In order to help us, to benefit us, to be able to reveal the purest wisdom, the most beneficial attitude, such as altruistic wisdom, and altruistic attitude, and reveal the complete path, the Sutra and Tantra, he took upon him all that just for our benefits.

e. Can we afford to still get distracted while the Buddha gave us all?

So, now let's think and evaluate if we are wasting our life by not practicing Dharma, even though we have access to it. Now let's think is there any room for us to get distracted by any worldly concern, by any minor samsaric day-to-day obstacles.

While someone out there, like Shakyamuni Buddha, worked from countless eons of times for us and provided everything for us, yet we are not taking it. Even when we encounter Dharma, we take only a very little fraction of the teaching, of the practice, not the complete teaching.

We also never really pay full attention, put full concentration, full mindfulness, into the practice.

So, when we think of the effort that Shakyamuni Buddha invested for our temporary well-being as well as our ultimate well-being, now let's ask ourselves: "can I afford to waste my life? Can I afford to still get distracted?"

When we think of Shakyamuni Buddha, we need to feel that.

C. There are different versions that you can use.

1. The Refuge prayer

Sang gyä la kyab su chhi o

Chhö la kyab su chhi o

Gen dün la kyab su chhi o

In English:

I take refuge in the Buddha.

I take refuge in the Dharma.

I take refuge in the Sangha.

2. The Common 4 Lines Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer

Sang gyä chhö dang tshog kyi chhog nam la

Jang chhub bar du dag ni kyab su chhi

Dag gi jin sog gyi päi tshog nam kyi

Dro la phän chhir sang gyä drub par shog

In English:

I take refuge until I am enlightened

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

By my merits of generosity and so forth,

May I become a buddha to benefit transmigratory beings.

The two first lines are for the Refuge, the two other ones, for the Bodhicitta, very good when one has the Bodhisattva vows.

It also allows you to do two retreats at the same time: Refuge AND Bodhicitta.

3. The 6 Lines Refuge prayer of the Vajrayana practice (the Tantric Refuge)

There is a six lines prayer that some Gurus will emphasize **because it gathers a Guru yoga practice, a deity yoga practice and a refuge practice, all in one:**

La ma la kyab su chhi o

Sang gyä la kyab su chhi o

Chhö la kyab su chhi o
Gen dün la kyab su chhi o
Yidam kilkhor ki dagso kor tang che pa nam la kyab su chhi o
Palgon dam pa choe kong we sungma yeshe ki chen dang denpa nam la kyab su
chhi o

In English:

I take refuge in the Guru.
I take refuge in the Buddha.
I take refuge in the Dharma.
I take refuge in the Sangha.
I take refuge in the Yidam and all the deities of your Yidam mandala.
I take refuge in all my Arya Dharma protectors and all the Arya Dharma other protectors of your
protectors' mandala.

You can also use only the first four lines version of the prayer above.

Even without any Tantric initiation, because there are not elements of self-generation, it is ok. **It will create the meritorious conditions to meet with your karmic meditational deity/deities.**

So, if you can do the most extensive one, it is very beneficial. That will be the best.

4. Other options

You can also use the four immeasurable prayers, or the verses of Shantideva's Bodhicaryavatara, or Nagarjuna's commentary on Bodhicitta, or the verses to generate aspirational Bodhicitta and engaging Bodhicitta.

You can also use the prostration prayer "Namo Gurubhya..." because it also carries the element of refuge. It is also very beneficial to restore broken samayas, degenerating faith, criticizing, drawing blood ...

You can focus on the first line and visualize you are purifying the relationship with your Guru applying the example of visualizations described in the purification preparatory practices heading (tenzinzopa.com/ebook/ebook/gurudevotion.pdf), or in the next heading about the different ways to recite the prayers, or in the heading of this booklet dedicated to Lama Tsongkhapa Guru yoga.

At the end, visualize and understand you actualized pure basis to actualize Buddhahood. Then, take a few minutes to recite the other lines dedicated to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and do the same visualization with each one of them.

You can do the exact same way with "La ma la Kyab su chhi o".

Therefore, you can use any of those options: the Refuge prayer, or the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer, or the Tantric Refuge (4 or 6 Lines) or any of the options listed above. There are different causes of practicing those different refuge practices based on different purposes (different Yanas).

You can also seek advice from your Guru. Guru may do observations to know which one would be most beneficial for you and for your retreat.

D. Recitation, accumulation and dedication

As far as it concerns the number of recitations, you have to accumulate **a minimum of 100.000 recitation of the prayer**. Usually, **we do some extra 10.000 as a supplement**, in case there would be some mispronunciation, or in case of any mistake in the recitation, or any limitation in the accumulation of the correct number.

It is a minimum, but you can accumulate as much as you like. Some practitioners may have accumulated one million, or more, while spending their whole life in retreat. Nowadays, there are still some practitioners like that.

If you do it properly, within two weeks, it can be completed comfortably with four sessions a day, each session of around two hours.

While doing the recitation, **visualize an uninterrupted nectar flowing from the object of refuge, ever shining rays of light, to you and the rest of the numberless sentient beings.**

You must have this conviction that same as you, when you receive the nectar and the light, all of them are receiving them as well and feel the same way simultaneously. And all of you are completely purified from any negativities and transformed into a pure light body like the Buddhas.

You still have the same aspect but in a light form. **Feel uplifted. Cleansed. Completely purified** from all your delusions and karma, empty of any difficulties, especially if you have some kind of health issues.

Then, **there are different ways to recite the prayers.**

1. Refuge prayer (3 lines)

If you are using the Common Refuge prayer, **you can do one by one or all the lines together** (*cf. 3. Tantric Refuge prayer for instruction about those 3 lines below*).

2. Four Lines Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer

You can recite either the first two lines about the refuge until the 100.000 (plus a supplement of 10.000), and then after the Bodhicitta lines.

The reason for that is to target your meditation and recitation on the refuge. You combine with the visualization described before for the Refuge part.

Then, you associate with the Bodhicitta lines a meditation on Bodhicitta: aspirational Bodhicitta, engaging Bodhicitta. You can do very elaborate using Shantideva's Bodhicaryavatara.

3. Tantric Refuge prayer

Or, if you are using the "Lama la kyab su cchi o" prayers (the 4 lines of the 6 lines), **you can do one by one or all the lines together.**

If you do one by one:

- **1st line: you focus mainly on your Root Guru and the lineage Lamas** and **make a special connection with them requesting** never to be separated from their guidance until you

achieve enlightenment, requesting to always turn the wheel of Dharma, requesting to never depart into Parinirvana.

Visualize the Guru is totally **pleased by your request...Feel absolutely purified** from any negativities committed in relation to your Guru, such as harming their holy body, not obeying Guru's advice, then disturbing Guru's heart, criticizing the Guru, losing faith in the Guru, ...and completely under the protection of the Guru.

Keep repeating this visualization during the whole recitation.

- **2nd line you focus mainly on the Nirmanakaya aspect of the historical Buddha, the 17 Panditas, the Mahasiddhas, earlier and later Kadampas Masters. They are all Nirmanakaya aspects of the enlightened beings.**

Similarly visualize the **purification** in relation to destroying Buddha's images or harming actual Nirmanakaya's Buddha holy body, doing business in relation to Buddha's holy objects, stealing or misusing Stupas, Buddha's statues, Tangka paintings, pictures...

In short whatever infraction you may have done in relation to the Refuge commitments, understand that they are now purified, your body, speech and mind are purified.

You actualize the blessings of the holy body, speech and mind of the Buddha, as well as any kind of any form of blessings from the Buddha.

Your life force increases, your merits, your knowledge, your realizations do so.

You understand you are completely under the protection and guidance of the Buddhas.

- **3rd: the main focus is on the scriptures: you understand they contain all the realizations on the path up to enlightenment, the truth of the path (direct realization on emptiness) in the appearance of scriptures.**

They form a pile as huge as Mont Meru filling up the entire universe, you can hear the echo of the Dharma that dispels the root cause of samsara: the ignorant grasping, in you and the rest of the sentient beings.

Infinite light rays are emanating from these scriptures enter into yourself and the rest of the sentient beings and **purify everything**, in particularly any negative karma committed in relation to abandoning the Dharma, misusing the Dharma, disrespectfully putting Dharma material under the buttock, on a bare land without any form of protection, treating them without respect. Then same than before, your lifeforce, merits...increase.

You actualize all the blessings of the Dharma in particularly any form in relation to the Dharma.

You and all sentient beings are totally under the protection of the Dharma.

- **4th mainly focused on the Arya Bodhisattvas, Arhats, Solitary Realizers, Hearers, Dakas, Dakinis, you make the aspiration that they will always be there to assist and bless you in your spiritual journey.**

They are so pleased with you, then immediately infinite light rays and nectar flow from them and reach you and the rest of the sentient beings.

All the negativities are **purified**, especially, all the karma created in relation to the Sangha by criticizing the Sangha, dividing the Sangha community, stealing the material offered to the Sangha, or consuming them without the permission, whatever karma committed in relation to the Sangha is purified.

Then, life force, merits...increase.

You actualize any form of blessings in relation to the Sangha.

You then feel completely under the protection of the Sangha refuge.

- **5th is the recitation to the deities, your meditational deity and the rest of the deities of the mandala.** The main focus is on **Buddha Vajradhara**, and the rest of the **Yidams** like Guyasamaja, Yamantaka, Heruka, Vajrayogini, Kalachakra, Hayagriva, all the Highest Yoga Tantra deities.

You can also visualize all the other meditational deities of the four classes of Tantra like Chenrezig, Maitreya, Manjushri, Vajrapani, ...whatever deity you are practicing.

If you have time, take a moment for each one of them, that would be really beneficial. Otherwise, you use the bird eye meditation technique and focus on Guru Vajradhara, or your main meditational deity, and everyone is there.

You request the blessings of the common and uncommon and the supreme blessings: in short, **all the blessings on the stages of the path, including the blessings of the generation and completion stages**, which are so rare to achieve. **You specifically request that.**

Immediately the omniscient mind understands, then infinite light rays, rainfall like nectar comes to you and the rest of the sentient beings.

Similarly, any karma and obscurations, especially the obscurations to actualize the uncommon supreme blessings, they are **all purified** the moment the nectar and the light touch you.

Your body turn into light form body, your mind actualizes the Dharmakaya mind. Your speech becomes the meritorious speech of the Buddha.

Then similarly, your merits, knowledge increase.

The negativities especially in relation to broken samayas, like tantric vows, Bodhisattvas vows, breaking sadhanas, not completing the practice done with wrong motivations, wrong dedication, wrong visualization, mistaken recitation of the mantra, incomplete recitation of the mantra. Everything is purified.

You receive all the deities' blessings and are completely under the refuge and protection of all your Yidams and completely protected and secured within the deity mandala.

- **6th the Arya Dharma protectors.** Generally, the main protector of the Mahayanic practitioner, especially Mahayanic Bodhisattva practitioner, the practitioner of altruism, of the Lojong practitioner, the protector of the Bodhisattvas is **Mahakala**, like Six Armed Mahakala, which is a special protector of Chenrezig, the special attendant of the protection in relation to Chenrezig.

Then the Dharma protector **Vaishravana** (or Namthöse in Tibetan) in particular to the practitioner whose main practice is the three higher trainings such as Vinaya, such as Hearers, Solitary Realizers, those who follow the middle capable beings' path, their main practice in the three higher trainings.

Then, **Kalarupa** is the protector of those who follows the smaller capable beings' path or whose main practice is Refuge and the karmic law of causes and effects.

Then, generally, the Dharma protector of the practitioner of the Vajrayana path, whose main practice is the union of method and wisdom, is **Palden Lhamo**.

Generally, it is like that, but for individual cases, you may have your own karmic infinite Dharma protector: it could be **Hayagriva** or others. You can check with your Guru, or you may follow your own instinct.

They play an important role for the progress of the practitioner clearing obstacles on the path...

In this practice you also go for refuge in the Arya Dharma protectors, then, you make a supplication “please fulfil all the conducive conditions, clear all the inner, outer and secret obstacles”, then while reciting, you do that visualization.

For somebody who practices Lam-Rim, the three Yanas, Bodhicitta...all those Dharma protectors are relevant to us.

From all the Dharma protectors, infinite light rays emanate...everything as mentioned before for the 5 other lines.

All the blessings that have a specific characteristic are achieved within your body, speech and mind. That is how all the negativities are purified, and you actualize all the conducive conditions to actualize your path.

That is why the six lines prayer is so significant. My late Guru specifically emphasized to do this one for my own individual case.

I am sharing the Refuge prayer retreat I did. I did a few Refuge retreats with that prayer. If you want to use it, you can. But generally, you would do the usual Refuge retreat prayer.

Also, **if you want to do the Refuge and Bodhicitta retreat**, then the prayer to use is “Sangye...”, to have both elements, the usual Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer, that is **the most common prayer, to complete both Refuge and Bodhicitta Ngöndro retreats.**

So, unless you have a specific guidance from your Guru, I would suggest you use that one.

If you cannot do multi-tasking, then you do the visualization first and then you focus on the recitation. If you start to feel some pain in your hand, take some rest from the accumulation and focus on the visualization. Once, rested you resume the accumulation.

End the session with **an altruistic extensive dedication**, for the long life, good health and the fulfilments of all the wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and all the Gurus.

Seal it in the three spheres of emptiness (the virtue and merits created, the dedicator and the object of dedication, all lie in the nature of inherent existence) and recite the prayers and mantra to accumulate the merits (cf. last chapter of the booklet).

IV. 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. Extra implements

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 meats, 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.

C. 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.

Understanding the visualizations of the sadhana

1. 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.

2. 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 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, the 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

D. 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 (cf. also preliminary practices and the preliminary prayers at the beginning of the booklet if you want to combine the Ganden Lha Gyalma and the Varjasattva practice).

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 have to 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.

E. 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.

Seal it in the three spheres of emptiness (the virtue and merits created, the dedicator and the object of dedication, all lie in the nature of inherent existence) and recite the prayers and mantra to accumulate the merits (cf. last chapter of the booklet).

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 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 torma, you can add each session a small piece of dough to:

- the torma 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.**

F. 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.

G. 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. Mandala offering retreat

A. Mandala offering practice – In general

1. Generating the conducive conditions for the success of our spiritual path

In order to accumulate the resources of merits and gather the conducive conditions to nurture ourselves in the spiritual development, in order to have a powerful impact of the tantric practice, you engage in the preliminary retreat of mandala offering.

Even if we may have studied a lot and know a lot, we may not have actualized the wisdom of the Dharma. Knowing the philosophy, the wording, intellectual understanding all the complexity of it to put the pieces of the puzzle together, does not mean we gain the wisdom of the Dharma.

To gain this wisdom we really have to understand the intent of Buddha. For example, there are four schools with four different views on emptiness. But Buddha’s view on emptiness has only been actualized by the Prasangika Madhyamika school, as expressed by Nagarjuna.

More than that, understanding the philosophical view must come to the point when every teaching becomes a pit instruction. Many times, those pit instructions **are coming from our Gurus,** you may not necessarily having found them in the book and rely on those realized Gurus. It may just some lightly words, even just one word of inspiration, something very simple when you hear the words but that counts to really get the point.

We need a lot of conducive conditions to really gain the wisdom when we learn the Dharma: to get the wisdom of contemplation, the wisdom of meditation, the wisdom after doing sadhana, the wisdom after doing deity yoga...

What are those conducive conditions? The merits are the conducive conditions. There are a method aspect of merits and a wisdom aspect of merits.

2. The sources of the practice itself

This practice is coming from Buddha's own teachings. There are many sources. It is a practice recommended in Sutras (there is even a Sutra of mandala). Then, the Tantric treatises also emphasize the importance of the practice.

The 17 Great Indian Pandits also mentioned it in their treatise. The Sutra of the King of Conduct, the Sutra of the supreme Bodhisattva's attitude, the Bodhicaryavatara, the Vajrapani initiation tantric treatise, the Vajra Cutter Sutra, later treatises such as the Abhidharma, the Fifty verses of Guru Yoga practice, the Six Session of Guru Yoga, they all emphasized it.

Some may have this misconception that it has been invented by the Tibetan Lama but no.

3. The benefits of the practice

When we actualize the mandala heaps, not only we offer the actual grains or heaps, but we visualize making offering of our entire existence of the entire universe. **You accumulate as many merits as what you are visualizing**, as if you were actually offering the whole of it. **By using the mandala base and doing the practice of the heaps, you actualize the actual offering of the entire visualized phenomena.**

There is a Sutra who clarified the question: are the benefits coming from the fact you are visualizing? No, **it is because you are using the mandala base and make offering with it. Just visualizing without using the mandala base you will not obtain the equal benefit.** From there, we understand the importance of using the physical mandala offering.

Some examples of the impact of the practice

In the past, in one of the holy cemeteries, a dedicated practitioner, did practice the mandala offering on a plain rock plate. Due to a constant practice using only pieces of rocks on a rock plate, he was able to actualize extensive merits: **without living the contaminated body he was able to actualize Vajra Yogini Pure Land.**

Then, King Ashoka, in one of his previous lives, as a little child, while he was playing in the sand, he saw the Buddha of that time. He has nothing to offer. He collected the sand in the middle of the street and visualized it as gold and offer it to the Buddha, in a very similar way to make a mandala offering (using his two hands as a base, collecting the grains, the visualization). **Because of that he was able to become a wheel turning King. Within one night he was also able to actualize the merits and capability to build 100 million stupas.**

Then, Gelongma Pelmo who founded the lineage of the Nyung-nay practice, she engaged in extensive practices of mandala offerings and was thus able **to have a direct vision of Chenrezig**, mainly because of the store of merits she accumulated by doing so.

During the time of Atisha in Tibet, a great Yogic Palden Gompawa was doing consistent extensive practices. He was a student of Atisha. He gathered the conducive conditions for him to **easily get into meditative equipoise.** Without distraction, without food, cold, ...he **completely entered into absorption meditation**, and this was recognized as the result of his consistent practice of mandala offering.

These are all the retreats that Lama Tsongkhapa did. Even after composing great treatises on the Madhyamika view on emptiness, Lama Tsongkhapa had still not realized directly emptiness. He understood it intellectually, he interpreted everything correctly. He **even composed the Root text that we still use nowadays to study emptiness. But he was unable to actualize in his continuum the realizations on the wisdom of emptiness.**

So, he sought advice from Manjushri. **Manjushri said he was lacking merits and lacking purification of negativities; that he should go on retreats.** But there were concerns about Lama Tsongkhapa's departure and its impact on the preservation of the Dharma in the region.

Manjushri answered "I know what is most beneficial". **The actual preservation of the Dharma goes by attaining the realizations of the Dharma which is the emptiness wisdom.**

So, Lama Tsongkhapa travelled to a place called Woga Choe Ling and did there, extensive practices of prostrations in relation to Vajrasattva and 35 Confession Buddhas, and extensive practices of mandalas offering (it was his main practice there).

At that time, Lama Tsongkhapa did not have a mandala base as we have in today's time. So, he used a stone. When you rub your wrist on the mandala base, the vein that is here, is regarded as enabling to generate Bodhicitta. On top of that the meaning of rubbing the base (purifying the three poisons and collecting the merits of three countless eons of virtues) is very precious.

He accumulated so many mandalas offering that his own flesh was damaged, you could see the bones; still, he did not give up. **Hundreds and hundreds of thousands.**

Then, **one day, he realized the wisdom of emptiness**, with the help of the merits and the purification. Suddenly, whatever he knew became a realization.

Also, my late Master, Geshe Lama Konchog, followed what Lama Tsongkhapa did when he was in the mountains and accumulated 1.200.000 mandala offerings using the rocks there. Of course, he did a lot of other Ngöndro practices, but he accumulated that much of mandala offerings.

And we all know the level of his realizations in this life, **through the relics he produced that were signs of the accomplishment of the completion stage, and many other realizations:** the five wisdoms of the Buddhas, the purification of the five aggregates: by purifying the contaminations, the continuum of the five subtle aggregates actualize the pure state of the five Dhyani Buddhas.

All the Lamas that you may know own a mandala offering set and you will witness if you travel with them, live with them, **it is one of the daily practices that they engage in, like Lama Zopa Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama.**

It is part of your spiritual journey; it is a must. Just offering in visualizations or with your hands is not enough.

4. The practice in general (on a regular basis, not as a retreat)

Generally, **for someone who does not have any Highest Yoga Tantric initiation, you can take any number as your objective.** Even one would be beneficial.

But if you have received a Highest Yoga Tantric initiation; then, **as a part of the Samaya, of the commitment,** you need to conduct six times a day the mandala offering (3 times a day, 3 times at night) as a minimum, just as you conduct six daily sessions of Guru Yoga.

Usually, if you travel or because of a busy life, at least you would carry the mandala offering recitation and use a mala and the hand gesture. **But actually, we should conduct the practice with a mandala set six times within twenty-four hours.**

A lot of texts emphasize the importance of doing that, like the Fifty verses of Guru Yoga practice, Guyasamaja tantric practice. **If we do not do that, we accumulate transgressions to the tantric Samayas.**

Hand gesture mandala offering

There is also a **gesture with the hand**, a mudra to do mandala offering practice. On top of your fingers, you add your mala. When you use it, you can regard it as making the offering of any of the mandala offerings listed below (different types).

But it is not sufficient and equivalent as using the mandala base. The visualization may be there, but the impact of the merits **cannot be compared with the use of an actual mandala base**. **When we talk about a Ngöndro practice, we need to use the actual mandala base.**

When we do the hand gesture, we can think that the mala is actually the representation of the offering. But in actual fact, the mala is the boundaries, the fence of the mandala offering you place after making all the offerings represented by the ten fingers.

In the prayer it corresponds to the:

OM VAJRA REKHE AH HUM

chhi chag ri khor yug gi kor wäi ü su

Those boundaries serve so you can visualize the entire universe onto that small mandala base, no matter how small it is. The universe does not to shrink to fit in. In order to actualize the actual merits of offering the entire universe, you need to bring the whole universe onto it. You can do that after creating those boundaries.

The ten fingers represent:

- the four corners stand for the four continents
- the two fingers in the middle stand for Mount Meru
- the tip of those two fingers in the middle represent the sun and moon
- in-between you have the subcontinents and the rest of the offerings we recite in the long mandala prayer.

B. All you need to know to take the essence of the practice during the mandala offering retreat

1. The visualization and the meaning of the Mandala

As far as the visualization is concerned, 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: visualizing your Root Guru as the embodiment of all the other Gurus, Yidams, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. It is the easiest and also regarded as most effective.

These are the objects to whom you are making offering of your mandala offering.

In Tibetan “kilkhor”. Kil is for “the essence”. Khor is for “extract”. Mandala means extracting the essence or taking the essence.

The Mandala can also be understood as the celestial mansion of the Buddha, or as a practice of offering.

Whichever of those three, in short, **extracting the essence of the practice is accumulating merits**. By making offering, you are accumulating merits.

The Buddha's mandala is where you take the essence of the four initiations. It is where you are initially actualizing the base practice, then the generation practice, then the completion practice, then you bring about the resultant Buddha within the center of the mandala.

All that can be understood as taking the essence of the Dharma, taking the essence of the practice: which is the merit of method and the merit of wisdom. **When you take the entire essence of the practice, you take Buddha's form body and Buddha's wisdom body**. That is the absolute completion of the merit of method and merit of wisdom.

So, whenever we relate to the mandala practice, if we are able to remember this meaning, then, it becomes even more purposeful.

2. How to take the essence of the practice

There are two ways to engage taking the essence of the practice (which is again accumulating merits):

- **One is to make it as an offering**
- **The other one is to request or to receive the blessings.**

For the first one (practicing mandala offering to make offering and accumulate merits), **you offer to the whole merit field for them to enjoy by receiving the offering in great bliss and abundance**. So, when you are doing it, we understand and visualize accordingly: they accept the offering, and they are enjoying it.

You expand through the visualization to each object of your merit field:

- to Guru you offer this mandala offering, which multiplies in numberless times and is received by all the piled-up mandala deities.
- to your merit field, you offer infinite offerings of the mandala: one by one if you, you make the offering numberless times to each one of them,
- or to the one (if you are visualizing your merit field embodied by your Root Guru) but then, numberless past, present and future Buddhas, everyone receives individually numberless times.

You receive infinite merits and dedicate them for the benefit of the numberless sentient beings, for you to actualize all the stages of the path until you achieve the resultant Guruhood, the Buddhahood.

The second type of offering **is offering for the Guru to grant the blessings to clear obstacles on the path, or to grant the blessing to actualize the wisdom to understand the Dharma, or to grant the blessings to actualize the path through meditation...**

We usually engage in the second type of offering during teachings programs before the Guru grant the teaching. You do the requesting Mandala offering. There are verses from the prayer book you can learn and use them (cf. later), or you just visualize you are requesting teachings and offering an abundance of mandala offering.

And at the end, you offer the thanksgiving mandala offering. It is very similar to the earlier one. **There are very beautiful verses** you can learn if you like to from the FPMT texts books or from other traditions, **that help strengthen our visualizations.**

When you are doing the requesting and thanksgiving mandala offering, it is the most powerful and central practice, especially in relation to the Guru during a teaching, and as explained before, because the Guru Yoga practice is essential.

3. A variety of mandala offerings: the four kinds

There are different intensities and levels of mandala offering practices.

Four kinds of mandala offering practices:

- **outer mandala offering**
- **inner mandala offering**
- **secret mandala offering**
- **mandala offering of suchness.**

For the **outer mandala offering**, we are using the heaps and the mandala base.

For the **inner offering** we are using our own body: the flesh, the bones, the blood, the inner organs, everything. There are extensive practices. Basically, even though we are using a mandala base, we visualize the skin as the ground base, then, on top of that you place all the different organs as the heaps, you visualize them as a wish-fulfilling gems, and you offer to your Guru, Yidam, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, all the merit field.

It is very powerful to bring about the **separation from the attachment to our aggregates**. There are many benefits to actualize the **wisdom of renunciation**, to actualize the **wisdom of selflessness**, the **emptiness in relation to the self and the aggregates**; also, to accumulate vast merits because of making charity of what is dearest and closest to you: your own body and aggregates.

That practice can be related to the Cho offering practice to cut the grasping. There are extensive mandala offering practices and one of them use the inner mandala offering practice.

As far as the **secret mandala offering** is concerned, **you understand the feeling of the inner bliss, which is the natural inherent bliss in relation to our clear light, the void of the absolute freedom from all the conceptual and conventional grasping**: the bliss that you actualize from emptiness in relation to your Buddha nature; **and you visualize it in the syllable HUM**.

From **that syllable HUM you actualize the entirety of existence in the bliss, and you offer to the merit field**. You offer the great bliss that you experience at the time of death, due to the melting of the white and red substances, and then the gathering of the energies to the indestructible drop, caused by the opening of the indestructible drop when the clear light is experienced. You experience the bliss of that clear light, and you offer it. This is the subtlest state of bliss.

Then, **the suchness mandala offering: the wisdom of understanding emptiness onto both subject and object** (not just the wisdom of understanding emptiness in relation to the object which is known by the wisdom) but **including the wisdom itself knowing its own absolute nature, which is empty of inherent existence**.

You visualize that understanding into the syllable HUM at the center of the mandala base and you offer that.

4. A variety of mandala offerings: different number of heaps and different prayers you can combine

Generally, in the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism, there are five different numbers of heaps of the mandala:

- seven heaps mandala offerings
- nine
- twenty-three
- twenty-five
- thirty-seven.

The formation and recitation of the prayers is different, but the meaning is the same. We are very familiar with the 7 and 37 heaps versions.

The most common and general one in both Sutra and Tantra is the seven heaps mandala offering. It is common but mainly based on the sutric tradition.

Sa zhi pö kyi jug shing me tog tram

Ri rab ling zhi nyi dä gyän pa di

Sang gyä zhing du mig te ül wa yi

Dro kün nam dag zhing la chö par shog

The seven heaps are: the Mount Meru, the four continents, the sun and the moon.

The nine heaps mandala offering is according to the **Kalachakra tantra**. On top of the seven previously listed, **you add Tadjin and Bhume**.

There was a center within the FPMT who was using the prayer. You can hear too in some nunneries and monasteries, but in most of our center not.

Then, especially in the **tradition of Lama Tsongkhapa** there are **23 heaps and 25 heaps**. That is the one Lama Tsongkhapa used during his retreat. Between those two, the prayer is the same; but **the difference comes from whether you in the counting the counting of the golden base and the boundaries**. It also does not include the opening:

Zhing kam ül war zhu

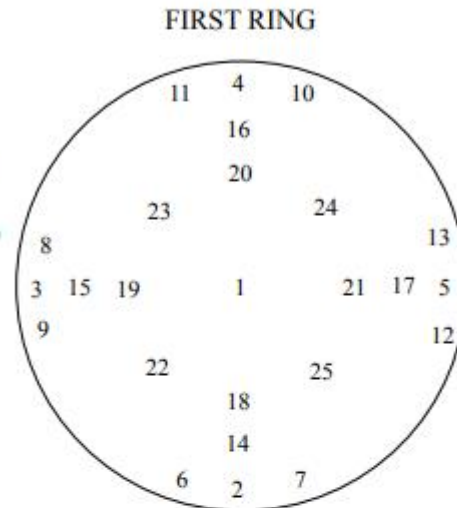
Then, the tradition of the great yogi Drogön Chögyal Phagba, a Sakya Master, has **37 heaps**. **It is the most used within all four traditions. Even in the FPMT prayer book, we are using it:**

(Zhing kam ül war zhu) OM VAJRA BHUMI AH HUM / wang chhen ser gyi sa zhi / OM VAJRA REKHE AH HUM / chhi chag ri khor yug gi kor wäi ü su Rii gyäl po ri rab / shar lü phag po / lho dzam bu ling / nub ba lang chö / jang dra mi nyän / lü dang lü phag / nga yab dang nga yab zhän / yo dân dang lam chhog dro / dra mi nyän dang dra mi nyän gyi da / rin po chhei ri wo / pag sam gyi shing / dö jöi ba / ma mö päi lo tog Khor lo rin po chhe / nor 65or in po chhe / tsün 65or in po chhe lön po rin po chhe / lang po rin po chhe / ta chhog rin po chhe / mag pön rin po chhe / ter chhen pöi bum pa Geg ma / threng wa ma / lu ma / gar ma / me tog ma / dug pö ma / nang säl ma / dri chhab ma / nyi ma / da wa / rin po chhei dug / chhog lä nam par gyäl wäi gyäl tshän ü su lha dang mi yi / päi jor phün sum tshog pa ma tshang wa me pa / tsang zhing yi du ong wa di dag drin chän tsa wa dang gyü par / chä päi päi dân la ma dam pa nam dang kyä par du yang La ma lo zang thub wang dor je chang / chhen pöi lha tshog khor dang chä pa nam la zhing kam ül war gyi o / thug je dro wäi dön du zhe su söl / zhe nä kyang dag sog dro wa ma gyur nam khäi tha dang nyam päi sem chän tham chä la / thug tse wa chhen pö go nä jin gyi lab tu söl

How to construct a mandala with 3 rings

FIRST RING

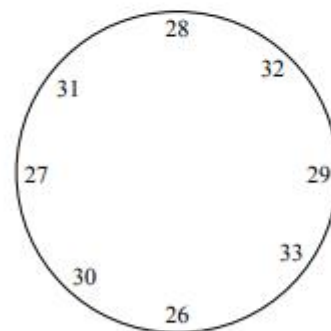
1. Mount Meru
2. Videha (Eastern continent)
3. Jambudvipa (Southern continent)
4. Godaniya (Western continent)
5. Kuru (Northern continent)
6. Deha (Eastern sub-continent)
7. Videha (Eastern sub-continent)
8. Camara (Southern sub-continent)
9. Aparacamara (Southern sub-continent)
10. Shatha (Western sub-continent)
11. Uttaramantrina (Western sub-continent)
12. Kurava (Northern sub-continent)
13. Kaurava (Northern sub-continent)
14. Precious mountain
15. Wish-granting tree
16. Wish-fulfilling cow
17. Unploughed harvest
18. Precious wheel
19. Precious jewel
20. Precious queen
21. Precious minister
22. Precious elephant
23. Precious horse
24. Precious general
25. Great treasure vase



SECOND RING

SECOND RING

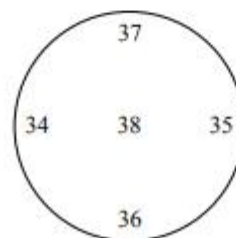
26. Goddess of beauty
27. Goddess of garlands
28. Goddess of song
29. Goddess of dance
30. Goddess of flowers
31. Goddess of incense
32. Goddess of light
33. Goddess of perfume



THIRD RING

THIRD RING

34. Sun
35. Moon
36. Precious parasol
37. Banner of victory in all directions
38. In the center, the most precious possessions of gods & humans



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You can add there the Four line mandala offering and:

- **if you are requesting a teaching**, you can also add:

Je tsün la ma dam pa khye nam kyī

Chhö küi kha la khyen tsei chhu dzin thrig

Ji tar tsham päi dül jäi dzin ma la

Zab gyä chhö kyî chhar pa wab tu söl

- **Or, if you are thanksgiving for a teaching:**

*Je tsün la mäi ku tshe rab tän ching
Nam kar thrin lä chhog chur gyä pa dang
Lo zang tän päi drön me sa sum gyi
Dro wäi mün sel tag tu nä gyur chig*

- You can also add **after a teaching:**

*Khor dä rang zhin dül tsam me pa dang
Gyu drä ten drel lu wa me pa nyi
Phän tshün gäl me drog su 67har wa yi
Lu drub gong dön tog par jin gyi lob*

- You can also add other prayers **to make special offering of:**

*The body, speech, and mind of myself and others
as well as our wealth and collections of virtue of the three times,
An excellent and precious mandala together with a mass of Samantabhadra offerings,
I visualize and offer it to the guru, yidam, and the Three Jewels.
Through the force of your compassion, please accept them and grant me blessings.*

... and make offering of the whole of it like a Tsog.

- **You can also offer the object of your three partial attitudes**, attachment, ignorance, aversion, loved ones, enemies, strangers, body, wealth, enjoyments without any sense of miserliness or attachment:

*Dag gi chhag dang mong sum kye wäi yül
Dra nyen bar sum lü dang long chö chä
Phang pa me par bül gyi leg zhe nä
Dug sum rang sar dröl war jin gyi lob*

That brings the purification of those three attitudes and the blessings of the Buddhas.

- **You can also offer the Special Request for the Three Great Purposes** (Lama Chopal):

*La ma dang kön chhog rin po chhe nam pa sum la chhag tshäl zhing kyab su chhi o / khye nam
kyi dag gi gyü jin gyi lab tu söl*

*I prostrate and go for refuge to the guru and the Three Rare Sublime Ones. Please bless my
mind.*

*Dag dang ma sem chän tham chä she nyen la ma gü pa nä zung te nang chhe thob sum gyi nyi
nang thra möi bar gyi chhin chi log gi lo na tha dag nyur du gag par jin gyi lab tu söl*

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.

*She nyen la gü pa nä mi lob päi zung jug gi bar gyi chhin chi ma log päi lo na tha dag de lag tu kye
war jin gyi lab tu söl*

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

Kyen chhi nang gi bar chö tham chä nye war zhi war jin gyi lab tu söl

Please bless us to immediately pacify all outer and inner obstacles.

This is very important in relation to any karma committed towards the Guru or the Guru Yoga practice. It helps purify thus the heaviest obscurations. **Then, because the Guru being the most powerful object of offering, we can collect this way the two kinds of merits that will lead us quickly to the state of full enlightenment.**

- You can also add the 7 Limbs prayer form the King of Prayers or general 7 Limbs offering verses.

Then you finish with:

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAM

If you cannot remember the lines, you can read them one time to grab the meaning and then visualize it, while holding the mandala base and reflect on the meaning, in order to accumulate extensive merits.

C. The mandala offering practice retreat

1. Specificities of the altar for a mandala offering retreat

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.

But, specifically for the mandala offering retreat, it is important to have the object that you offer as a mandala offering not just in visualization: if you are able to create the merit field of your mandala offering that would be perfect.

You can have an altar, where there are the Guru, the Yidam, all the holy objects, like the representations of the Buddhas, the representations of the scriptures, the stupa, ...

If you can have another set of mandala base, the full set or at least a base, not necessarily a traditional one, it can be a plate made of precious gems (gold, silver, copper, or if not just ceramic...), you put that upside down and place 5 heaps on top of that.

The heaps can be made of tormas (flour mixed with three white: yogurt, milk, butter) and three sweets: honey, sugar, brown sugar) in buldur shape (round shape) and you put one in the center, then four at the four corners.

If not, heaps of grains, like rice, or any kind of eatable grains and you put five heaps of them, or five heaps of the substances you use for your mandala set. Put that in the center of your altar in front of the holy objects.

The middle one represents your Guru. The Eastern side represents the Yidam, your meditational deity. Then, the Southern side, Buddha. The Western side the Dharma. Then, the Northern side the Sangha.

Because of using the mandala base, it has its own significance. **Putting your Guru as a central heap of your merit field actualizes the Guru Yoga practice. By engaging this Ngöndro practice into a Guru Yoga practice you will boost your practice to accumulate even greater merits in relation to the mandala offering.**

A great Master Galwa Ugatsanba said that many people meditate on the generation and completion stages; but in the actual fact, the Guru Yoga practice is the most essential. There is no greater practice than Guru Yoga practice when it comes to the meditation practice.

In Tantra, the major practice is the generation and completion stages. Many do that sometimes missing out the attached practice of Guru Yoga, missing to put the Guru Yoga at the center of their practice.

2. The accumulation

a. Four Lines Mandala Offering and preparation of the blessings of the implements

The Four Lines Mandala Offering is regarded as very precious.

Lama Tsongkhapa says it was composed by the “Always crying Bodhisattva”: one of the greatest examples of Guru devotion practice. While doing all the other services to his Guru, his main practice to honor his Guru was this practice of the mandala offering.

For the mandala retreat in today’s time, we hardly do the longest version. It became very common to use this short one.

You can use **these four lines conjoined with the beautiful prayer of Refuge and Bodhicitta** composed by Lama Atisha:

JANG CHHUB SEM CHHOG RIN PO CHHE

MA KYE PA NAM KYE GYUR CHIG

KYE PA NYAM PA ME PA YI

GONG NÄ GONG DU PHEL WAR SHOG

Or just recite the Four Lines Mandala Offering (cf.before).

The mantras to bless the mandala set, the heaps, the substances that will be used to clean the mandala base (parchung)

The Parchung is made with saffron water and five substances that come from the cow (cow dough, cow urine, cow milk, cow yogurt, cow butter). Mixed together, it actualizes a very powerful substance which can purify the impure basis.

- You bless that substance with: Om Benze/Vajra Dake Ha Hum (then, you can clean the base with that to actualize it to be used for meaningful practices)

- To bless the mandala grains: Om Benze/Vajra Pushpe Ha Hum
- To bless the mandala base: Om Benze/Vajra Rekhe Ha Hum.

The reason to bless the substance is to symbolize the purification of our mind, our delusional and the hallucinational stains of our mind.

The reason to bless the grains is to never be separated from the moisture of great compassion and Bodhicitta whatever practice we do.

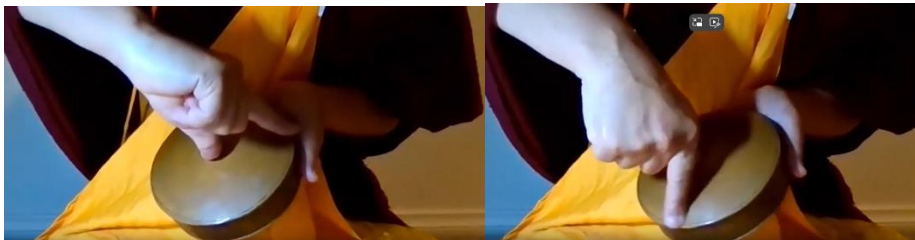
The reason to bless the mandala is to actualize to be able to contain the whole offering you wish to offer: the universe, without the universe to get smaller, to accumulate the merit of actually offering the entire universe.

Collect the substances: they can be very tiny, in a small container. You mix.

Use your thumb and your first finger:

For the “upper” part of the mandala base (when you look at the base in front of you, the part that is opposite):

- dip the tip of your first finger in the substance
- place your thumb in the center of the mandala
- from the left to the right, with your first finger (the one you dip in the substance) you touch the mandala base following the outline of that half part of the mandala base (“upper”) all the way up to the South direction.



Then, the “lower” half part to cover the whole base:

- put your thumb in the substance
- put your first finger in the middle
- from the right to the left, you use your thumb to do a half circle along the outline of that lower half part of the mandala base, from the South to the North.



The text says the best is to do it every day, before every practice, or at least once a year. **It creates the causes to purify impure moralities** like broken samayas, immoral actions. It helps to **actualize the meritorious karma of pure morality**. It will eventually condition us **to bring about the perfection of the Paramita of morality**.

As for the blessings of the heaps, usually when you conclude the mandala, you pour all the grains inside the base or plate. Put all the ring inside. Then, you use saffron water and a blessed vase, and sprinkle it one time, on the substances or grains, while reciting the mantra Om Benze/Vajra Pushpe Ha Hum.

Without the vase and implements, you can use your ring finger: dip it into saffron water and you sprinkle it in the same way.

Then, the blessing of the mandala base with or without the substances: you use the saffron water and vase with Om Benze/Vajra Rekhe Ha Hum, or just your finger ring and saffron water.

b. Accumulation and number of sessions

You can organize four sessions a day (2 to 3 hours) or many shorter ones (cf sample timetable part III).

You can integrate the mandala offering accumulation to the Ganden Lha Gyalma sadhana as explained at the beginning of the booklet referring to the Preliminary practices and prayers.

If you have the opportunity to go to Bodhgaya or any other blessed place, even for a few days, that will be so beneficial. I did mine in Bodhgaya with many other Sanghas and sat around the Bodhgaya stupa to do it combined with prostrations practices...We did it during the opening hours of the stupa: from 3 am to 8.30 pm, just taking break for the meals.

As for the other retreat, **during the first session on the first day, you just do one set of mandala offering** (even if we have to do 6 times a day), for the kickoff of the retreat, the short version, and start the accumulation on the day after.

Then to protect the mandala offering, you always wrap it in a (precious) cloth. It is good to have a big one, it is more comfortable. Then, you use the string to pass it around your neck and tie it around your neck, or on your belt behind.

Then, you spread nicely the clothe on your laps.

Starting from the second day, before you do the accumulation, you do all the preliminary other practices (refuge, Bodhicitta, 7 Limbs or at least the Refuge and Bodhicitta, cf. part III), and then start with the long one.

You start the accumulation after:

- With the base, three times clockwise with your wrist rubbing the base (for the cleansing), then three times anticlockwise (for the three positivity) with the Refuge prayer.
- Then, **while you are placing the heaps on the base and principal ring, you recite the Short Mandala Offering prayer.**

For the last mandala offering of the session, you do the long version.

Or, during the retreat, if you cannot (because of lacking time), **you can do one long in the morning and in the evening.**

It is so beneficial to use the long version ones (23 or 25 or 37), especially for us disciples of Lama Tsongkhapa, to follow the example of our Gurus.

c. How to use the mandala set(s)

If you can afford to have **two mandala sets:**

- you do the 37 heaps mandala **with one and you put it on the altar** or in the table, in front of you
- and **use the other set for the accumulation.**

As I mentioned before, **there is a creation of heaps on the second mandala base** (center, 4 corners with whatever you have: torma, biscuits, grains, precious stones...) **to represent your merit field.**

You offer the long mandala with the first set before you actually start to count the number with the second mandala set using the four lines prayer.

At the end of the session, **you take down the mandala that is in the altar** (the first one which serves as a merit field, long offering mandala) reciting *Idam Guru...* **When you start the next session, you repeat the same thing.**

For the accumulation of the number, **if you have just one set: you do the long version and after that you accumulate the heaps on this first fully actualized mandala.** You keep it in one hand and with the other hand, you simply pour heaps onto it reciting *sa zhi*, **without doing again the heaps, just a flow, an abundance of precious grains pouring on top of the mandala set.**

For the counting, because you are busy with your two hands, you can calculate how many mandala offerings you can accumulate in one minute.

Another way, after doing the long mandala and put it on the altar as your merit field, you use only the mandala base (not the rings) paying attention to always have your left hand filled with grains (you cannot offer an empty offering: the base is empty).

Then, with your right hand, **you take some grains and using the wrist to rub the base.** There is a nerve here, at the level of the wrist, that carries the channel that has the capability **to actualize clairvoyance.** The teachings also emphasize it also carries the way **to activate Bodhicitta.**

Even if there is nothing to clean, by rubbing your wrist **three times clockwise** on the base, through the visualization **you actualize the cleansing of your three poisons or any negativity** you specifically wish to purify.

When you rub **three times anticlockwise, you gather** the practice of the three higher trainings, the wisdom of the three baskets of teachings, the three aspects of the path, any form of **blessings or wisdoms.**

While you rub, you also gradually release the grains. This is a minimum. During the retreat, you have to do the accumulation, so you will do it three times each.

But in daily life, you can do the purification and gathering as many times as needed, until you are fully convinced the purification is done. You can recite Vajrasattva mantra. Some even do for hours, doing the whole visualization of Vajrasattava.

Anticlockwise, you can recite the Bodhicitta prayer composed by Lama Atisha “jang chub sem cchog rin po chhe...” or to actualize emptiness “Tong nyi ta wa rin po chhe...” or to actualize the two tantric stages of generation and completion “Rim nyi tog pa rin po chhe... », or the refuge prayer.

Or, if someone is going through life threatening obstacles (yourself or family members), you can recite a Long-life Sutra, or Long-life deities’ mantras or Medicine Buddha mantra and do a healing

meditation. Using the emptiness mantra, you can visualize the meaning of it with all the five paths and the ten Bhūmis.

There is a specific benefit to use the mandala base and those specific mantras and prayers.

Eventually you will be able to finish the accumulation of the 100.000 (+10.000) mandalas offerings. You can compete with Lama Tsongkhapa or Geshe Lama Konchog, but at least the commitment is 100.000 (+10.000).

d. End of the session, long version to offer mandalas in-between sessions, dedication

At the end of the session, you do the long version:

- You **rub the base (rubbing then Mount Meru up to the unplugged harvest):**

*(Zhing kam ül war zhu) OM VAJRA BHUMI AH HUM / wang chhen ser gyi sa zhi / OM VAJRA
REKHE AH HUM / chhi chag ri khor yug gi kor wäi ü su*

*Rii gyäl po ri rab / shar lü phag po / lho dzam bu ling / nub ba lang chö / jang dra mi nyän /
lü dang lü phag / nga yab dang nga yab zhän / yo dân dang lam chhog dro / dra mi nyän
dang dra mi nyän gyi da / rin po chhei ri wo / pag sam gyi shing / dö jöi ba / ma mö päi lo
tog*

- Then you put **the bigger string (Seven Royals)**

*Khor lo rin po chhe / nor bu rin po chhe / tsün mo rin po chhe lön po rin po chhe / lang po
rin po chhe / ta chhog rin po chhe / mag pön rin po chhe / ter chhen pöi bum pa*

- Then you put **the second ring (eight Goddesses):**

*Geg ma / threng wa ma / lu ma / gar ma / me tog ma / dug pö ma / nang säi ma / dri chhab
ma / nyi ma / da wa / rin po chhei dug / chhog lä nam par gyäl wäi gyäl tshän ü su lha
dang mi yi / päi jor phün sum tshog pa ma tshang wa me pa / tsang zhing yi du ong wa di
dag drin chän tsa wa dang gyü par / chä päi päi dân la ma dam pa nam dang kyä par du
yang*

- **Then the little ring (sun, moon, parasol, victory banner):**

*La ma lo zang thub wang dor je chang / chhen pöi lha tshog khor dang chä pa nam la
zhing kam ül war gyi o / thug je dro wäi dön du zhe su söl / zhe nä kyang dag sog dro wa
ma gyur nam khäi tha dang nyam päi sem chän tham chä la / thug tse wa chhen pö go nä
jin gyi lab tu söl*

Then, you do the prayers, finish with *Idam Guru...*, and dissolve.

When you accumulate, do not stress out too much on the placement, sometimes you will mix up. **As long as you start at the right spot, finish at the right spot and use the full set in-between, it will be ok.**

You can do that anywhere. **There is no need to have a dedicated one place, or a dedicated seat like for the other Ngöndros.** It is not really necessary. As long as you are motivated to do the retreat.

You start with one, until you accumulate the 100.000 (+10.000), do at least one daily. As far as it concerns with the altar, you can have an extensive one or the simplest. **Many do in Bodhgaya without altar, without even a second set: they just do the offering in front of the stupa or the holy object.**

Whenever you go in a pilgrimage or in a blessed places with many relics, even doing one mandala offering is already so meaningful. The motivation is the most important. It is just a decision; you can start anytime. From the four Ngöndros retreats, it is the easiest to launch and to conduct anywhere.

Because we do not start, we miss so many opportunities when we go to a blessed place, or during a teaching, to do the requesting mandala, thanksgiving mandala in the presence of the living Guru.

That is the greatest thing in term of accumulation of merits and it brings a nice atmosphere, the sincerity of everyone, everybody making noises, enthusiasm in the Dharma.

We do not do it for that, but that energizes, and **the Guru can see it, to see the disciples in the footsteps of their own practices.**

Before in the past, before taking a highest tantric initiation we had to conduct the four Ngöndros. **They are a preparation for that. It makes the practice of the Highest Yoga Tantra then meaningful.**

To maintain the offering constantly in-between sessions

At the end of each session, do the long mandala in the similar way in the base (not on the base):

- fill your hand with substances
- rub the base in the same way
- place it upside down and recite Om Benze Bhumi Ha Hum
- then, in the exact same, pour the substances inside while reciting the prayer
- add the rings one by one or altogether
- keep on doing the heaps and recitation until completion, pour all the substances inside
- recitation of the prayers (or later cf. below)
- **but do not say *Idam Guru...***
- Wrap the clothe around the mandala
- Hold the cloth and use the string to close it
- You can do the four lines prayer and the other prayers also after that
- Place the mandala on the altar
- When you resume your next session (it can be next day): hold your mandala offering
- Say *Idam Guru...*and dissolve.

This way you maintain the offering of the mandala all the time (even if you do not resume for one month).

Dedication

End the session with **an altruistic extensive dedication**, for the long life, good health and the fulfilments of all the wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and all the Gurus.

Seal it in the three spheres of emptiness (the virtue and merits created, the dedicator and the object of dedication, all lie in the nature of inherent existence) and recite the prayers and mantra to accumulate the merits (cf. last chapter of the booklet).

e. The meaning of the long mandala prayer

Om (3 syllables in one) = Om Ha Hum, it represents **the basis** of the practitioner body, speech and mind as the objects **to be purified**. It symbolizes the engagement on the path to purify the body, speech and mind and **the resultant Buddha's body, speech and mind**.

Benze = it refers to the vajra: it represents objectively the emptiness, **the unification of the great bliss and emptiness**. You can reflect on that meaning while reciting.

Bhumi = the great golden land or golden base: the base which is actualized on the basis of the inseparability of the three vajras, actualized from the union of great bliss and emptiness. That is the golden base, actualized to place the whole universe as an offering on it.

Rekhe = the boundary or fence you actualize from the unification of great bliss and emptiness arises from there

Ah = symbolizes the wisdom of emptiness

Hum = symbolizes the great bliss, the method aspect of the path

The rest = different offerings

Idam = this

Guru = Guru

Ratna = Precious jewel

Mandala = celestial offering or the celestial mansion

Kam Niryatayami = actualize this offering: the infinite celestial that is actualized, the preciousness of the ratna is offered to the object, the Lama, the Guru, this particular offering to be actualized.

In short, the celestial is offered to the Guru, may you actualize and accept it.

3. Advantages and disadvantages (of not practicing it)

The disadvantages of not doing it is that it will not create the practitioner successful generation stage and actualizing the completion stage of the path.

We already have obstacles and obscurations to actualize the higher path. **Actualizing the two tantric stages is the hardest.**

Practicing mandala offering will clear the obstacles and therefore **will help to actualize those two stages quickly. By not practicing it, it will take us long time to do so.**

Therefore, the teachings say we need to practice it daily until we achieve the completion stage.

Many sutras and tantric treatises emphasize its importance and benefits to accumulate abundance of merits in the quickest way, and therefore for both mundane and spiritual benefits.

The realizations on the stages of the path will quickly come in our way. All our wishes will be easily fulfilled.

As someone who has already taken tantric vows or initiations, like Highest Yoga Tantra or the four initiations from the Guru; one of the commitments of the samaya is to offer mandala six times a day.

4. You can also combine the mandalas offering practice with the Refuge practice for a retreat

You are doing all those retreats to accumulate as many merits as possible and you do not want to rush. We are not in the marathon of consolidating everything in one and try to finish up fast.

So, usually, we will not do that, but you can if you are really truly busy and with too many responsibilities, you can accomplish two retreats together: refuge/Bodhicitta and mandala offering.

If you combine the Refuge prayer and the Four lines mandala offering prayer:

- **While rubbing the base, you recite the refuge prayer:**

Sang gyä chhö dang tshog kyi chhog nam la

Jang chhub bar du dag ni kyab su chhi

Dag gi jin sog gyi päi tshog nam kyi

Dro la phän chhir sang gyä drub par shog

Three times clockwise (for the cleansing), then three times anticlockwise (for the three positivity). That is for the Refuge part.

- Then, for the mandalas offering part, you can use the offering of the mandala with 36 heaps, 7 heaps, one heap, ...**While you are placing the heaps on the base and principal ring, you recite the Short Mandala Offering prayer:**

Sa zhi pö kyi jug shing me tog tram

Ri rab ling zhi nyi dä gyän pa di

Sang gyä zhing du mig te ül wa yi

Dro kün nam dag zhing la chö par shog

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI

In English:

This ground, anointed with perfume, strewn with flowers,

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

I imagine this as a buddha land and offer it.

May all transmigratory beings enjoy this pure land.

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI

The seven heaps mandala offering is the most convenient one:

- The center is Mont Meru
- Then, the four continents on the four cardinal points starting in the opposite side of you (East), then on the right (South), then close to you (West), then on the left (North)
- Then, on each side of Mont Meru, the sun and the moon (the sun: on the left of Mont Meru, the moon on the right of Mont Meru)
- Then you recite “Idam Guru Ratna...” with the mandala at the level of your heart before dissolving it

When you release the grains, if there are no grains left on the plate or not, it does not matter.

VI. Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga

A. Introduction

1. No merits, no realizations: the closest channel to receive the blessings of the 3 jewels

Now, **you are ripened to practice Tantra, you also have all the conducive conditions thanks to the purification and the accumulation of merits** that aimed to make you a pure vessel to receive the immeasurable blessings of the Dharma (in particular the blessings of the realizations in our spiritual practices).

The journey is not the easy one: it can be a lengthy journey, a complicated journey, with a lot of effort required. **We need those conducive conditions to keep ourselves very focused on a steady sustainable practice.** Even, in case it may take three countless eons of lifetimes and timeframes to achieve full enlightenment, we will never change our path or get discouraged, even in this roller-coaster lifetime.

As long as we carry these samsaric aggregates and live in this samsaric environment, in particular in those five degenerated times, the karmas are so stubborn, the delusions are more stubborn than before. On top of the eight worldly concerns, one of the worst obstacles.

Even when we meet a qualified Guru, we receive correct Dharma instructions, and we live in a quite nice environment, where many people are also practicing; somehow, we are dragged to practice for good wealth, for long life, for prosperity, to clear obstacles.

Somehow, we tend to go away from the main focus, which is the **benefit of future lifetimes**, in particular for the **benefit of full enlightenment for the sole concern of the well-being of all the rest of the sentient beings.** The ego comes in even in the Dharma field (expectations and recognition, fame, name...). You get upset when criticized, when somebody points out your flaws, even when it comes from your Guru.

And when we go through experiencing the process of samsara, when aging, facing sickness, obstacles, we start to go away from Dharma. That sometimes happens too when we are too distracted and happy.

All those obstacles fall into two categories: one is desirous excitement, the other one is dullness, laziness. Because of that, we cannot stay fully concentrated in practicing the Dharma.

This weakness does not necessarily come because we have less education or know less about the disadvantage of the negativities. It is mainly because of lack of merits. The reason why we do not fulfill our wishes in our spiritual journey, like getting realizations, is because of that. Lama Tsongkhapa said that precisely. His life is the illustration of that. Once we have the store of

merit, then, whatever we wish will come in our way, in the mundane world, as well as in the spiritual world.

The Guru is the nearest channel to receive blessings. No matter how numerous and great Buddhas are out there, without the Guru we have no bridge to reach out to the blessings. Therefore, when you relate any practice in relation to the Guru Yoga, you actualize swiftly the blessings through the Guru.

2. A key practice in all traditions and lineages

All the different lineages as well as Sutrayana, Mahayana, they all have that king of Guru Yoga practice in relation to the Guru, their Elders.

In the lower Yanas, they do not really use this world “Guru”, they relate to the Elders in practices of veneration, service, respect, etc....

Even in Vinaya, mainly in the Hinayana tradition, the yoga of veneration, offering, respect, service, is one of the key Vinaya practice. When you become sangha and enter a Monastery, the seniority is extremely advanced, and it is an extremely serious practice. This can be regarded as Guru Yoga practice.

In both Mahayana Tantrayana and Mahayana Sutrayana, the Guru Yoga practice is one of the most essential practices to offer to someone who offered you transmissions, commentaries: you offer respect in both actions and thoughts.

In particular, in Tantrayana, the Guru Yoga practice is the essence. It is the root. It is the ultimate. It is the only way to actualize all the benefits of the tantric teachings and practices, including the Dharmakaya and full enlightenment.

B. What is Guru Yoga?

In Tibetan, Lama Naljor. “Lama” is referring to Guru. In Tibetan, it means someone who is extraordinary in precepts, in discipline, in the practice of concentration, in their wisdom. Lama surpasses you in qualities and you take that person as your example, object of veneration, your inspiration, object or state to be achieved.

We call it as **achieving the state of the Guru** which is **achieving the state of Buddhahood**. The **ultimate Guru** is the union of exalted wisdom and great bliss: **the union of the highest attitude of altruism and the exalted wisdom of emptiness**, or union of method and wisdom. That state is the state of Dharmakaya. **The definite or ultimate Guru is referring to the Dharmakaya.**

There is an objectified ultimate Guru and the “subjectified” ultimate Guru. **The objectified ultimate Guru is the Dharmakaya of the Buddha. The “subjectified” ultimate Guru is your own clear light mind. Your own clear light mind when it awakens in its absolute nature, is actualized in the union of great bliss and emptiness:** it is also called inner Guru.

The **conventional** Buddha nature is **the attitude altruistic aspect**. The **ultimate** Buddha nature is **the wisdom aspect**. Translated into **tantric terms**, it is called **great bliss and exalted wisdom**.

Whenever you focus on your own subtle mind, on **its absolute quality, the Buddha nature**, whenever you recognize that, you have this awareness of that, whenever you place your trust on that, whenever you recognize that is your ultimate being, **then you recognize your inner Guru, your inner guide.**

Whenever you see the inseparability of your so-called mind and that absolute nature, which is the Buddha nature within; **then, this is called the oneness of your mind with the Guru**. That unified with the meditational deity (in particularly of a Highest Yoga Tantric initiation deity). **You unify Guru, Yidam and yourself, in oneness.**

And that oneness is the Guru Yoga practice. It is the essence of Guru Yoga.

So, what is really Guru Yoga? **It is the awareness and understanding being in recognition, abiding in oneness with the Guru, Yidam and your mind, inseparable, oneness.** That is the inner yoga, the inner Guru, the ultimate being of you, that is the Guru and that is the Buddha, that is the Dharmakaya.

Then, that Dharmakaya or the nature of the union of exalted wisdom and great bliss arises into a form of a Buddha or a deity. **It is in fact your true nature arising as a deity. Or the Guru absolute nature arising as a deity. Or the deity's own absolute nature, which is Dharmakaya, arising as a deity.**

Now that Dharmakaya arising into your teacher's form arising into a being which appears similar to you, your human form but who carries this quality of Lama. Again, that Guru is no other than arising from your own same nature. Therefore, Guru is in fact ultimately no different than you, your ultimate nature.

That is why Guru yoga is so essential, ultimate. **It is the root from where you can take off for your spiritual journey. It is also the final destination where you will land.**

It is only when you know that that you really know yourself. Until then you are in hallucination.

As long as you know that and are aware of that, you are inseparable from the Guru.

The reality is you are never separated from your Dharmakaya isn't it? Sometimes we think about our Guru as something external. But the Guru is just a manifestation in form of that Dharmakaya.

All those protocols of newly finding your Guru, your Yidam is only there to clarify only something that is already there behind the temporary clouds of our confusion, and we see it as disconnected. We do this Guru yoga **to achieve this in realization.**

Lama Naljor: "Nal" means "yoga", training, going forward, walking. "Jor" means "arrive": you arrive at the state of Guru. You arrive there through your practice which is the Yoga.

C. Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga

As we are in the Gelug tradition, the Guru Yoga sadhana we will use in the Hundred deities of Tushita sadhana, Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga.

1. Lama Tsongkhapa name mantra

In order **to open (or expand) the channel of the lineage blessings and really receive the blessings, which means for the blessings to become your path** (to actually actualize the path); **you do Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga retreat**, with a 100.000 accumulation of Migtsema (+10.000):

Four-Lines Migtsema

Mig me tse wäi ter chhen chän rä zig

Dri me khyen päi wang po jam päl yang
Gang chän khä päi tsug gyän tsong kha pa
Lo zang drag päi zhab la söl wa deb

In English:

Avalokiteshvara, great treasure of non-objectifying compassion.
Manjushri, master of stainless wisdom.
Tsongkhapa, crown ornament of the sages of the Land of Snow:
Lozang Dragpa, at your feet I make requests.

Or Five-Lines Migtsema

Mig me tse wäi ter chhen chän rä zig
Dri me khyen päi wang po jam päl yang
DÜ PUNG MA LÜ JOM DZÄ SANG WÄI DAG
Gang chän khä päi tsug gyän tsong kha pa
Lo zang drag päi zhab la söl wa deb

In English:

Avalokiteshvara, great treasure of non-objectifying compassion.
Manjushri, master of stainless wisdom.
Lord of Secrets, destroyer of the entire host of maras.
Tsongkhapa, crown ornament of the sages of the Land of Snow:
Lozang Dragpa, at your feet I make requests.

That will really make yourself like a sponge, whatever practice you do, its nectar will be fully absorbed.

Based on the sadhana Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga, you accumulate the **Migtsema: the name mantra of Lama Tsongkhapa** Four Lines Prayer or Five Lines Prayers (either way is fine).

When I did this retreat, my late Master Geshe Lama Konchog asked me to do the Five Lines. If you do the Four Lines, the Vajrapani prayer is skipped. For those who are very advanced practitioners, with a high level of practices, it is ok; **but as a beginner, we have so many hindrances, obstacles, especially obstacles of delusions, obstacles of unseen, like spirits, etc. Vajrapani is the antidote to that.** Therefore, Lama said it was good to do the Five Lines.

If you do it diligently, in two weeks, you can accomplish it.

2. The Hundred deities of Tushita Sadhana or Ganden Lha Gyäma

“Naljorna”, the main yoga starts from there:

- First you have the **invocation of the merit field**. You are creating, actualizing the merit field where you are going to practice the purification in relation to the Guru and accumulation of merits in relation to the Guru.
- Then the main activity, the main Yoga, is the **7 Limbs practice** to purify and accumulate merits.

This is the “Nal”. By actualizing this, you achieve “jor”, the state of the Guru.

By the end of the retreat, you may realize, awaken your true nature. Or at least, as a minimum, you gain the full conviction that your true nature is not different than the Guru, than the Buddha.

To truly respect and feel that (which is easy to say but not to truly feel it) you need to go through this Naljor, through this Yoga.

The entire Sadhana I shared with you was compiled by Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche. The first part, the Hundred deities of Tushita was composed by Venerable Dunlap Palden Sangpo. This realized Bodhisattva is regarded as one of the heart disciples, highlighted disciple of the first Dalai Lama.

He was also the disciple of one Lama Tsongkhapa heart disciple Jetsub Sherab Senge. This Master pledged to Lama Tsongkhapa directly during one of the public teachings occasions that when Lama Tsongkhapa publicly asked” in future times when I am not around who is going to preserve the teachings I have shared with you, in particular the tantric teachings?”

Even though at that time, Jetsub Sherab Senge was not among the first lines, he had a lot of merit and courage, so when nobody else raised his hand, he pledged. That is how the college tantric colleges started, colleges that for so many hundreds of years up to now preserved the lineages (especially) of the teachings on Guyasamaja, Heruka, Yamantaka, which are the three principal Highest Yoga Tantra deities in relation to Lama Tsongkhapa.

These are whispered teachings, only passed down mouth to ears from Lama Tsongkhapa, through those highly realized disciples. So, it is a very personal practice.

Therefore, whoever practices it, it becomes so effective to accumulate all the resources to gain realizations on the path. All those lineages’ holders (the heart disciples of Lama Tsongkhapa and Lama Tsongkhapa himself) are the proof of the efficiency of the practice.

The rest of the resources of the text assembled by Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche come from Pabongkhapa Dechen Nyingpo, one of the main lineage holders of Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings.

Only that part of the sadhana is good enough in terms of purification and accumulation of merits. But there is also a great benefit of combining it with the rest of the practices, **such as the practice of Lama Tsongkhapa’s name mantra recitation or the yoga to actualize the seven different types of wisdoms.**

This practice is the abbreviated version of the Guru Yoga practice. The extensive one is Lama Chöpa. There is also the Six-session Guru Yoga practice. The essence of the Guru Yoga practice is as explained before the recognition of Guru, Yidam, your mind being one.

D. The importance of the practice of Guru devotion in relation to the Guru Yoga practice

1. The qualities of a qualified teacher

In the same way that we need a teacher to learn any skills in our day-to-day life, we need a skillful teacher to show us the path to enlightenment.

Beside **common spiritual teachers' qualification and practices to cultivate as taught in the Lamrim bases on Maitreya's Ornament for the Mahayana sutra:**

Rely on a Mahayana teacher who is disciplined, serene, thoroughly pacified, has good qualities surpassing those of the student. That he is energetic, has a wealth of scripture knowledge, possessing loving concern, has a thorough knowledge of reality, skilled in instructing the disciple, and has abundance descriptiveness.

For a complete commentary of all those qualities and everything that is related to Guru Devotion and Guru Yoga, you can refer to the ebook about the reliance on the Guru, which is one of the key teachings and practices, [gurudevotion.pdf \(tenzinzopa.com\)](http://gurudevotion.pdf(tenzinzopa.com)).

Lama Atisha says the minimum required characteristics of such a preceptor, or rituals master, or tantric initiation Guru should be as described in the verse from Guru puja:

I make requests to the supreme vajra-holder

Who controls the three doors, is intelligent,

Patient and honest, without deceit or pretense,

Who knows mantra and tantra and is skilled in

Both sets of suchness, in drawing and explaining.

What it means is an authentic tantric preceptors use **mindfulness and mental alertness to exercise control over their physical, verbal and mental activities.**

They have **great intelligence and practice the three kinds of patience** by not taking account of harm inflicted, by willingly accepting hardships and by gaining certainty with regard to the teachings.

They are honest and sincere in their dealings with others and are free from deceitfulness and pretense.

They have a **profound understanding of Mantra and Tantra** which they can explain clearly and are able to employ the methods described in Tantra to free their students from interferences.

There are **ten inner and ten outer aspects** of suchness or reality, with which a well-qualified tantric preceptor should be conversant. Those who confer initiation of the Action, Performance and Yoga Tantras need skills in the outer aspects, while those who confer Highest Yoga Tantra initiations should be skilled in the inner ones:

- The first of the ten inner skills is the **ability to create a protection circle in meditation** to rid others of obstacles.
- The second is to **draw mandalas** which can be worn as protection amulets.
- The third skill is in **giving the secret initiation**
- The fourth is in **giving the wisdom initiation**. This implies the need for competence in giving the other initiations as well.

- The fifth skill is **proficiency in separating enemies of the teaching** from their protectors and tutelary deities in order to stop their harmful activities.
- The sixth is the **art of offering ritual cakes to worldly and supramundane guests**.
- The seventh is **expertise in different forms of mantra recitation**.
- The eighth in **the use of coercion** when practices associated with the stage of generation, such as visualization and mantra recitation, intended to actualize the deity, have been properly performed without success.
- The ninth skill is in consecrating representations of enlightened body, speech and mind and prayer beads.
- The tenth is competence **in activating the mandala, making offerings, entering the mandala and performing self-initiation**.

Now, the outer skills:

- The first one consists of **meditating on the mandala with and without form**. This refers to external mandala, namely the residence and the deities within it, both of which have form, and the internal mandala, the wisdom of bliss and emptiness, which is formless.
- The second is to maintain meditative stabilization of oneself as the deity within the mandala.
- The third is proficiency in the **various hand gestures for offering adornments to the deities**.
- The fourth skill is in **the performance of ritual dance**.
- The fifth is the **ability to assume a wide variety of postures such as the vajra position**.
- The sixth is in **mantra recitation**.
- The seventh is in conducting peaceful, increasing, powerful and wrathful fire offering rituals.
- The eighth is in **making outer, inner and secret offerings**.
- The ninth is in **performing peaceful, increasing, powerful and wrathful** activities as well as giving protection and inviting different kinds of guests.
- The tenth is in **concluding rituals and sending guests back to their different dwelling places**.

Tantric teachers who possess all these abilities are getting rarer and rarer.

2. The qualities of a qualified student

Not only does the Guru need to be qualified, but **the student too needs basic ripening qualifications in order to fulfil the benefits of relying on qualified Guru**.

The defining characteristics of the student who relies upon the teacher minimum should have the required characteristics taught by Aryadeva in his Four Hundred Stanzas

It is said that one who is nonpartisan, intelligent, and diligent

Is a vessel for listening to the teachings.

The good qualities of the instructor do not appear otherwise

Nor do those of fellow listeners.

Aryadeva says that one who is endowed with the three qualities is **suitable to listen** to the teachings.

Non partisan. Certain translations mention “**impartial**”. There may be many explanations. What I understand is that you must be very clear about your objective of relying on the Guru, your purpose of practicing Dharma, and your purpose of choosing the spiritual path. **A clear direction without the bias of relying on your own ordinary mind pursues, and ordinary mind’s objectives, because that is tainted by worldly concern.**

Because even when you pursue the Dharma, you will pursue the Dharma for worldly purposes, for temporary benefits. If the relationship you establish with the Guru is not for liberation, but is for worldly purpose, then, you do not have that quality of nonpartisan mind. **The Nonpartisan mind is having clear purpose for enlightenment.**

Then, the second one is **intelligent**. The intelligence here is merely referring to **having the discrimination of knowing what to be adopted, what to be abandoned**. As a minimum, for someone who is aspiring to true Dharma, you need to have a basic wisdom of the limitations of the ten non-virtues actions and the advantages of the ten virtues actions: of samsara and karma. It means you know what Dharma is, what is not Dharma.

So how to define Dharma and non-Dharma, what is worldly Dharma. **Anything beneficial for liberation and enlightenment is Dharma.** Anything that is beneficial for worldly purpose is non-Dharma. Anything that is not beneficial for liberation and enlightenment is not Dharma. What boosts our delusions or what creates the causes for liberation and enlightenment. **Even with a correct motivation, without basic discrimination, you may follow the wrong path, mistaken instructions by mistaken speakers.**

After that **diligent**. Certain translations mention joyous effort, persistence and constant practice. Then, even with the correct motivation, you are “intelligent” plus, you have received correct Dharma instructions, you meet a qualified Guru, you meet the complete Dharma, but **if you do not practice persistently, then you will not gain the realizations, or the benefits of the practice.**

He also says that if you have all these qualities, **the good qualities of one who instructs you in the teachings will appear as good qualities, not as faults**. In addition, he says that to such a fully qualified person the good qualities of fellow listeners **will also appear as good qualities and not as faults**.

Lama Tsongkhapa, in the Middle Length Lam-Rim continues with:

Even if one has both impartiality and intelligence, someone who is just like one of those listening to the Dharma in a life less painting is not a suitable vessel. Therefore, you also need to have strong interest. Candrakirti’s commentary states that, first, respect for the Dharma and the expounder of the Dharma and, second, an attentive mind is added, so that five characteristics are set forth. That being so, we can categorize this into four: strong interest in the Dharma, a fully attentive mind while listening, great respect for Dharma and the expounder of Dharma and holding to good explanations and rejecting faulty ones. Intelligence is a conducive circumstance for those four, and impartiality is what eliminates adverse circumstances.

To the first three qualities, two are added. **Always to be respectful to the Dharma** that you are learning and practicing, **and to the teacher**, physically, verbally and in thoughts; **and to be attentive, not**

to forget. Attentive means both attentive during the teachings but also, whatever the Guru says to try to receive instructions for liberation, to enlightenment.

Therefore, whenever you are around the Guru, whatever he manifests, laughing, crying, walking, sitting, **everything you try to interpret into Dharma.** Another meaning is **whatever instructions you receive you practice consistently, all the time.** These are the five qualities of the disciple.

It is stated in Chandrakirti's commentary that if you, the listener, do not have all these defining characteristics of a suitable recipient of the teachings, then **the influence of your own faults will cause even an extremely pure teacher, who instructs you in the teachings, to appear to have faults.** Furthermore, you will consider the faults of the one who explains the teachings to be good qualities.

Therefore, although you might find a teacher who has all the defining characteristics, it may be difficult to recognize their presence. Thus, it is necessary for the disciple to have these three characteristics in their entirety in order to recognize that the teacher has all the defining characteristics and in order then to rely on that teacher.

If the disciple is not equipped in those 3 or 5 qualities, then even if the Guru, by his or her own side, is a real Buddha, he will not be able to fulfill all the spiritual purpose of the disciple's journey.

3. How to rely on the Guru in thoughts

In the Middle Length Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa writes that two things need to ripen in our heart to devote themselves to the Guru in thoughts, **irresistible faith and a genuine sense of respect:**

This has two points: the root, training in faith, and remembering his kindness so as to generate respect. Jewels 'Blaze Dhāraṇī (Ratnolkādhāraṇī) says: Faith, a preliminary practice, gives birth like a mother to all good qualities, guards them, and makes them increase. This says that faith gives birth to excellent qualities that have not yet arisen, and once they have come into existence, it maintains and increases them.

Always admiring the Guru and always seeing the qualities in him allows you to always pay attention to anything that comes from the Guru's body, speech and mind. **Then, everything becomes an open book teaching.** Everything is inspirational.

That is how you become like the Guru. Wishing is not enough; you have to train your body, speech and mind. You have to train to think about the way the Guru thinks, behave the way the Guru behaves. If someone says, "you behave like your Guru", it is a huge compliment. You have to trust the Guru. You have to train in all that so that it becomes stable. That way nothing can part from your Guru.

Even when the Guru scolds you: "the Guru knows I have some unpacified secret obstacle". So, the Guru throws a powerful deity mantra to me to dispel all these hindrances. Unseen obstacles are purified. But if the Guru does not scold you that does not mean that you do not have any hidden obstacles.

Then, always remembering the kindness. Always express so much respect. With no faith you may receive some benefits, but they will not increase. To receive fully the blessings, it is very much like a container to receive the nectar of the Dharma. **Especially the faith you develop through reasoning on the advantage of the Dharma of the benefits you receive by relying on the Guru. Not just blind faith.**

First, how to cultivate the Guru devotion in thoughts. The Tantra bestowing the initiation of Vajrapani says:

If you would ask, O Lord of secrets [which is talking about Buddha] how disciples should see the Master? Then, I would answer that they should view them just as they view the Baghavan.

This is Buddha own guidance: **see your Guru as Buddha**. Then the Tantra bestowing the initiation of Vajrapani adds:

Keep the master's good qualities in mind, never see upon their faults.

Very important. There are many times, our own faults reflect on the Guru, our own limitations reflect on the Guru. Then, we start to apprehend that as the false of the Guru. **So, always be mindful. The Guru is Buddha.**

Then, when your mind is pure, you can translate everything as a teaching, as Buddha's qualities, like the scolding as a powerful mantra, even just one slap as an initiation. **The benefit you receive is the enlightened benefit.**

Apprehend your master's excellent qualities; do not ever apprehend his faults! Apprehending his qualities will gain you siddhis; apprehending his faults will block their attainment.

In the Middle Length Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa comments on the previous verses this way:

You should act accordingly. Thus, if excellent qualities predominate in your guru but you think about him in terms of the few faults he has, this will become an obstacle to your own siddhis.

So, that is it. Everything is there. **The moment you see even one little limitation, it becomes an obstacle to you to actualize the benefit of the Dharma, the realizations.** It does not matter if there is a fault or not, but from your side, seeing the qualities, that helps to condition to gain realizations on the path.

In today's time, due to our lack of merits, it is very difficult to actualize the perfect Guru. Therefore, in ordinariness' appearance, there are a lot of limitations, and it is so easy to see limitations. Therefore, even if you see it false, you only focus on the qualities. You may see false, because of our own limitations, but do not focus on that.

Then, there is another Sutra, the Ten Teachings Sutra:

Develop the following ideas with respect to your teacher. I have wandered for a long time through cyclic existence, and they search for me. I have been asleep having been obscured by delusions for long time, they wake me, they pull me out of the death of the ocean of existence. I have entered a bad path, and they revealed the good path to me, they released me from being bound in the prison of existence. I have been worn out by the illness for long time, and they are my doctors, they are rainclouds that put out my blazing fire of attachment and like.

So, think like that and try to see the enlightened qualities of the Buddha and express gratitude, kindness.

So, seeing this we should never forsaking even at the cost of our life.

4. How to rely on the Guru in actions

How to rely on the Guru in actions? Maitreya's Ornament of Mahayana Sutra says:

Rely on the teacher by way of respect, material things, service, and practices.

Then, there is another Sutra, Fifty praises of Guru Yoga about the Guru Devotion practice:

What need is there to say much here. Do whatever pleases your Guru, eliminate all that displeases them. Analyze this. Strive at it.

Then:

Offering to your pledge master constitute continues offerings to all the Buddhas. Offering to them is the collection of merits. From the collections of merits supplies wisdom, comes the supreme attainment.

Then, again from the 50 verses, Lama Tsongkhapa quoted in the Lam Rim:

Furthermore, the student perspective differs from the Guru's perspective, the student must do this offering because the Guru are the supreme field through which the student accumulates a collection of merits and sublime wisdom. However, the Guru must not take the gift into consideration.

This is very good. In this regard Ornament for the Mahāyāna Sūtra says:

Through homage, offerings purely obtained, and service and practice, you should rely on a spiritual friend.

Even if you want to make a material offering, if you are capable, there are two things you need to keep in mind: a material object that is pure by its nature, meaning not obtained through wrong livelihood, like selling weapons, exploitation...and pure by its motivation, meaning free from the 8 worldly concerns. In the Middle Length Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa says:

The three means of pleasing the Guru are offering him material things, serving him and paying him respect with body and speech, and practicing in accord with his advice.

Then:

Second is bathing him, anointing him, massaging him, wrapping him up, cleaning him, nursing him when he is ill, and so forth, and talking about his excellent qualities. The third is the main one, which is practicing without going against his instructions. [...] It is said that the benefits are enormous, outshining the roots of virtue of making offerings and the like to innumerable Buddha's.

So, the best offering is your practice. The best offering is practicing according with the instructions and the teachings, whether you are close to the Guru or not, whether you are attending him or not. What will make your Guru the happiest is to live your life in accordance with the Dharma. To live with Bodhicitta to please your Mahayanist Guru. And be diligent about your practice.

What a qualified Mahayanist Guru does not like you to do? Waste your life in worldly concerns like the eight worldly concerns, following the delusions like committing negativity. They do not like that you get distracted by those. The Guru is pleased when your whole life is infused with the Bodhisattvas' way life of life. You take your entire ways of life, and you integrate them with the Bodhisattvas' way of life. At least with your motivation.

By keeping the Samaya pure and following the instructions properly, you will be able to purify all your past karma, even the heavier one that would bring you to being reborn in the Lower Hell

Realms, just by having one little inconvenient dream, or some headache, by the power of proper reliance on the Guru.

Lama Tsongkhapa writes in the Middle Length Lam-Rim:

If you take someone as your spiritual teacher and then relinquish your reliance on him, you will be harmed by illnesses and evil spirits in this life, and in future lives you will have to experience the immeasurable sufferings of the lower rebirths.

We already have an abundance of negative karma. Because of breaking Samaya, we are without protection. Then, all the karma will ripen and then we will experience suffering, obstacles in life and bad rebirth in future lifetimes. **When we rely on the Guru, we have protection and freedom. When we do not rely on a Guru we are not.**

This has to be understood in this way. It is not that by relying on the Guru, then we will experience all that if we break the Samaya. No, we already have created such karma and will have to experience the consequences. Relying on the Guru protects us.

Lama Tsongkhapa says:

Aside from that, excellent qualities that have not arisen will not arise, and those that have arisen will deteriorate and vanish. If you rely on non-virtuous friends and bad companions, your excellent qualities will also diminish, your faults will increase, and misfortune will befall you.

Therefore, it was taught that this should be avoided in every way.

So, we should train diligently in the practice repeatedly as Lama Tsongkhapa says:

It will not be enough to perform the visualization in a single meditation session.

Then Buddha Vajradhara statement says:

Attainment follows proper reliance on the master. Thoroughly please your Guru in all things.

E. Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga retreat

- 1. Preliminary practices** (cf. beginning of the booklet)
- 2. Preliminary prayers and actual sadhana (commentary)** (cf. beginning of the booklet)
- 3. Requesting Blessings – Accumulation (Migtsema)**

Through making supplications you will receive blessings by accumulating recitation of the Migtsema, which is also called Lama Tsongkhapa supplication prayer.

The 4 (without the line dedicated to Vajrapani) **or 5 Lines Migtsema Prayer** (more commonly used) is actually the second part of the Guru Yoga in relation to Lama Tsongkhapa. It is a **condensed form of Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga.**

It can be nice to recite the 9 lines at the beginning and the end of the session.

That prayer serves as a direct antidote to any form of negative karma committed in relation to Guru to reestablish pure samaya. Guru is the most powerful object to accumulate merits. The Guru is also the most powerful object to generate negative karma on our path. Visualize all these negativities going out from your system in the form of dark smoke and you actualize a clear like crystal body.

While accumulating the mantra, **we make supplications to receive the following blessings:**

- **7 wisdoms**
- **Outer aspects of the enlightened qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa and to receive the outer blessings**
- **Inner qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa and to receive the inner blessings**
- **Enlightened secret qualities and their blessings.**

While reciting it, **you do the visualization of Lama Tsongkhapa as a Merit field:**

- **remembering his/the enlightened qualities of the three deities:** wisdom (Manjushri), compassion (Chenrezig), power (Vajrapani)
- the **three seed syllables** on Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples (crown: white Om, throat: red Ha, heart: blue Hum)
- **purification** of one's body, speech and mind creating the meritorious blessings the resultant enlightened body, speech and mind.

Then (second part) while continuing the recitation of the mantra, **you actually actualize:**

- **this purification,**
- **long life,**
- **and then the 7 wisdoms.**

The purification

While reciting you visualize **light rays emanating from the Om coming towards you with a white nectar flow which enters your crown, fills your entire body and purify any form of negativity.** You actualize all the causes and conditions to actualize the resultant body of Guru Lama Tsongkhapa.

Same from the Ha at the throat (red nectar flow) and the resultant speech of Lama Tsongkhapa.
Same from the Hum at the heart (blue nectar flow) and the resultant mind of Lama Tsongkhapa.

Another way of doing this visualization is **combining the three nectar flows in one** to cleanse any negativity, impurity, obstacles:

“By the force of having fervently requested in this way (e.g. reciting Migtsema), hollow beam of white light emanates from the heart of the perfect father and sons combining into entered my crown”.

Long life

To accumulate long life by clearing the inner, outer, secret obstacles to life (lifespan lost due to spirit harm, chocs, accidents, negative environment, diseases...), while reciting Migtsema mantra:

- visualize blood and pus (representing all diseases and their causes) going out from the down hole like urine, feces
- visualize spirit harms under the form of a scorpion going out from down hole
- past negative karma, obscurations, negative conditions, circumstances in the form of dark smoke going out from down whole.

Down there Yama, the lord of death opens his mouth and consume that. That cleanses everything. When the Lord of death receives that, he gets satisfied and immediately closes his mouth, faces outward and disappears without leaving any trace.

Have the full conviction and faith that through the blessings of Lama Tsongkhapa that all your inner, outer and secret obstacles are completely purified, and all the conditions for your healthy long life to actualize realizations on the path within this very lifetime are restored, actualized.

You can dedicate this practice to your Guru, family members, especially those who are going through health issues. Visualize their obstacles are consumed by the Lord of death.

7 wisdoms:

- Please grant me blessings to achieve **great understanding (or great wisdom)**, which is able to **understand and explain the meanings of extensive scriptures without resistance:**

Great understanding, in the form of **orange-colored nectar beams clarified as pure Lord Manjushri**, is emitted from Lama Tsongkhapa and his two sons, absorbing into me and filling my whole body. Then, atoms of nectars, which are clarified as pure Lord Manjushri, radiate out to the victorious ones and their sons. Thus, the great understanding of the victorious ones and their sons, in the form of the deities' holy bodies, absorbs into me and fills my whole body.

- Please grant me blessings to achieve **clear wisdom**, which can **understand and clarify the details of very subtle and extremely difficult points without resistance:**

Clear wisdom, in the form of **orange-colored nectar beams clarified as the syllables of the mantra OM AH RA PA CHA NA**, is emitted from Lama Tsongkhapa and his two sons, absorbing into me and filling my whole body. Then, atoms of nectars, clarified as OM AH RA PA CHA NA, radiate out to the victorious ones and their sons. Thus, the clear wisdom of the victorious ones and their sons, in the form of OM AH RA PA CHA NA, absorbs into me and fills my whole body.

- Please grant me blessings to achieve **quick wisdom**, which quickly **cuts the non-understanding and wrong-understanding and doubts without resistance:**

Quick wisdom, in the form of **orange-colored nectar beams clarified as the syllable DHI**, are emitted from Lama Tsongkhapa and his two sons, absorbing into me and filling my whole body. Then, atoms of nectars, clarified as the syllable DHI, radiate out to the victorious ones and their sons. Thus, the quick wisdom of the victorious ones and their sons, in the form of the syllable DHI, absorbs into me and fills my whole body.

- Please grant me blessings to achieve **profound wisdom**, which can **understand and explain the meaning of scripture with depth and without resistance:**

Profound wisdom, in the form of **orange-colored nectar beams clarified as the implements (text and sword)**, are emitted from Lama Tsongkhapa and his two sons, absorbing into me and filling my whole body. Then, atoms of nectars, clarified as the implements, radiate out to the

victorious ones and their sons. Thus, the profound wisdom of the victorious ones and their sons, in the form of the implements, absorbs into me and fills my whole body.

- Please grant me blessings to achieve the **wisdom to explain the Dharma**, which **gives definite, supreme understanding of all the meanings of all the words of the scriptures without resistance:**

Wisdom to explain the Dharma, in the form **of orange-colored nectar beams clarified as texts**, are emitted from Lama Tsongkhapa and his two sons, absorbing into me and filling my whole body. Then atoms of nectars, clarified as texts, radiate out to the victorious ones and their sons. Thus, the wisdom to explain the Dharma of the victorious ones and their sons, in the form of texts, absorbs into me and fills my whole body.

- Please grant me blessings to achieve **debating wisdom**, which enables one to **achieve bravery over evil debate without resistance:**

Debating wisdom, in the form of **orange-colored nectar beams clarified as wheels of swords (Dharma wheel with 8 Manjushri's swords inside)**, are emitted from Lama Tsongkhapa and his two sons, absorbing into me and filling my whole body. Then, atoms of nectars, clarified as wheels of swords, radiate out to the victorious ones and their sons. Thus, the debating wisdom of the victorious ones and their sons, in the form of wheels of swords, absorbs into me and fills my whole body.

- Please grant me blessings to achieve **writing wisdom**, which **makes meaning and sound perfect and gives clear understanding and happiness:**

Writing wisdom, in the form of **orange-colored nectar beams clarified as texts and wheels of swords**, are emitted from Lama Tsongkhapa and his two sons, absorbing into me and filling my whole body. Then atoms of nectars, clarified as texts and wheels of swords, radiate out to the victorious ones and their sons. Thus, the writing wisdom of the victorious ones and their sons, in the form of texts and wheels of swords, absorbs into me and fills my whole body.

Among the 7 wisdoms, take the time to do a strong visualization for those which are specifically requirements for you personally, and spend less time on the others (to leave imprints for the future or future lives it is beneficial to do them all).

Then there are two verses that can be recited altogether three times or one by one three times:

Please grant me blessings to achieve extensive great wisdom that is able to understand

And explain the meanings of the extensive scriptures without resistance.

I request that the wisdoms of hearing, understanding, and meditation may increase.

I request that the wisdoms of expounding, debating, and writing may be developed.

I request that the general and sublime realizations may be granted.

Please grant me blessings to be quickly like you.

I request that the transcendental wisdom of the simultaneously born great bliss may arise.

I request that the stains of truly believing illusory thought may be purified.

I request that the net of doubts that are only in the mind may be cut off.

Please grant me blessings to be quickly like you.

Those verses are the one who contain the supplication in relation to the seven wisdoms. So, you can recite either the seven wisdoms texts above or those two verses.

The meaning of the Migtsema

It was written by Lama Tsongkhapa as a praise to Venerable Rendawa, one of his most important Guru. He saw in His Guru an emanation of the three deities.

But then, His Guru straight away replied “that praise suits you not me”.

This supplication prayer is **so unique because it is an offering between two highly realized enlightened beings**. That makes it so powerful among all the mantras and supplication prayers.

It is also so powerful because in relation to **the Guru being Lama Tsongkhapa** who is the **embodiment of the perfected attitude and wisdom**:

- being Chenrezig who is the embodiment of the **compassion of all the numberless Buddhas**
- being Manjushri who is the embodiment of the **wisdom of all the numberless Buddhas**
- plus being Vajrapani who is the embodiment of the **power of all the numberless Buddhas**.

When Lama Tsongkhapa’s mother was conceiving his son, she had a very clear vision of the compassionate Buddha entering her crown. She had the vision of so many people gathered to come and pay respect to the baby because of seeing the baby as Chenrezig.

When we look for reincarnation of Lamas, the mother’s signs play a very important role.

His father had a vivid dream while conceiving the baby that from Vajrapani Pure Land a vajra was thrown from there and entered the mother womb.

In relation to Manjushri there is a proposition by the Buddhas, that Lama Tsongkhapa is an emanation of Manjushri.

Therefore, when you make this supplication, you make it directly to the three deities and that will impact us to develop their perfected qualities.

To clear obstacles and have great success in the preservation of Dharma, chanting Migtsema is emphasized in the great monasteries for hundreds of years, especially in relation to the 7 wisdoms, **to become true great scholars like the great pandits**.

Also, to clear obstacles and gather the necessary conditions to practice and do retreats.

There are three types of compassion:

- non objectifying compassion
- compassion in relation to impermanent nature
- compassion in relation to the suffering of beings.

“Non objectifying compassion” is related to the compassion possessed by at least the Aryas beings expressed on having a correct view, having realized emptiness directly. In Tibetan Buddhism there are two aspects of Chenrezig: being an Arya Bodhisattva and a Buddha.

The “non objectifying compassion” is the most powerful tool to assist the antidote of wisdom to eradicate the subtlest defilements throughout the ten Bhumis.

Even if you actualize Arhatship, without compassion, the emptiness wisdom cannot perform to eradicate the defilement to omniscience, even though it may be able to help to actualize liberation. So, you cannot become Buddha.

“Stainless wisdom” is different than wisdom realizing emptiness, which still carries the stains of self-centered ego self-cherishing attitude and the self-centered ego ignorant.

“Lord of secrets”: Vajrapani is the **destroyer of the entire hordes of the maras**, meaning the maras:

- mara of delusions
- mara of death
- mara of distractions
- mara of defilements.

Vajrapani carries the power of overcoming the subtlest mara of defilements.

“Crown ornament of sages of the land of snow”: at that time, the major scholars of all the traditions were following Lama Tsongkhapa. Gyaltsab-Je used to be Sakya. Lama Tsongkhapa subdued him in debate and Gyaltsab-Je became his heart disciple after that.

His ordination name is Losang: wise mind and Dragpa: famous.

4. Request to abide at the heart

This is the conclusion. You can do those verses one by one or straight away the last one.

Visualize the two disciples and all the environment dissolving into Lama Tsongkhapa. Lama Tsongkhapa dissolves into light and enters your crown.

At the heart chakra, visualize **your heart** (at the center) which opens in the form of an **eight-petals lotus** redish color. In the center, the indestructible drop is contained. It looks like a lentil seed which mother egg (redish) and father drop (whitish).

The mother egg turns into a sun disk redish color. On top of that, father drop turns into a moon disk whitish color. Then, at the center is your Buddha nature, your consciousness in the form of light, subtle being, clear light, mental continuum (goldhish transparent energy).

Lama Tsongkhapa in the form of light enters that and becomes one with that. The eight petals lotus closes. You tie around the heart lotus with the Migtsema like a rope and Manjushri mantra like a rope.

The white cloud in light energy (where Lama Tsongkhapa resides) in the form of the thread still connected to Tushita (symbolism of Bodhicitta) and the golden energy (symbolizes Manjushri, can be in the form of DHI).

On top of the closed heart, you put a half cut vajra (symbolizes Vajrapani) like the drop, like a indestructible stamp. From there, you regard Lama Tsongkhapa (and/or the three deities) ever remaining oneness with you.

From now on any activity from your body, speech and mind coming from Lama Tsongkhapa and/or the three deities being one with you. You see anybody as emanations of the three deities. Living by that is living in Guru Yoga all the time.

Since there are three verses:

- 1st verse: Lama Tsongkhapa arrives at the crown
- 2nd verse: Lama Tsongkhapa arrives to the throat
- 3rd verse: Lama Tsongkhapa arrives to the heart.

Some Masters advise to visualize Lama Tsongkhapa arriving all at once. Do however you feel more comfortable.

5. Dedication

You can use the sadhana (cf. next chapter with the Ganden Lha Gyalma) or other prayers.

You can also dedicate like this: from now on, whenever and however I engage with the world it is in the conduct of a Bodhisattva to preserve the Dharma, to dedicate the rest of my life in virtue and for the benefit of all the rest of the sentient beings.

Seal it in the three spheres of emptiness (the virtue and merits created, the dedicator and the object of dedication, all lie in the nature of inherent existence) and **recite the prayers and mantra to accumulate the merits** (cf. last chapter of the booklet).

The essence is Guru, yourself, and the deities in oneness. All your activities are born from that. Dedicate the rest of your life to the Dharma and all the rest of the sentient beings. That is Guru Yoga.

VII. Retreat guidelines (strict retreat, 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-points 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

For this specific Ngöndro, we will use the Ganden Lha Gyama (the text is slightly different than for the other booklets).

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

How wonderful it would be if all the sentient beings were to abide in equanimity,

free of hatred and attachment, discriminating far from close.

May they abide in equanimity.

I myself will cause them to abide in equanimity.

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

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings had happiness and the causes of happiness.

May they have happiness and its causes.

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

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

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free of suffering and its causes.

May they be free of suffering and its causes.

I myself will cause them to be free of suffering and its causes.

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

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were never separated from the happiness of higher rebirth and liberation.

May they never be separated from these.

I myself will cause them never to be separated from these.

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

c. Generating special Bodhicitta

*For the sake of all mother sentient beings,
I shall quickly and more quickly
actualize the Guru-Deity's primordial state of buddhahood in this very lifetime.*

*I shall liberate all mother sentient beings from suffering
and lead them to the great bliss of buddhahood.*

For this purpose I am going to practice the profound path of Guru-Deity yoga (3X).

d. Purifying the place

*Everywhere may the ground be pure,
Free of the roughness of pebbles and so forth.
May it be in the nature of lapis lazuli
And as smooth as the palm of one's hand.*

e. Offering prayer

*May human and divine offerings,
Actually arranged and mentally created,
Clouds of finest Samantabhadra offerings,
Fill the entire space*

*OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VAJRA SARA PRAMARDANE TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAKSAM
BUDDHAYA / TADYATHA / OM VAJRE VAJRE / MAHA VAJRE / MAHA TEJA VAJRE / MAHA VIDYA
VAJRE / MAHA BODHICHITTA VAJRE / MAHA BODHI MÄNDO PASAM KRAMANA VAJRE / SARVA
KARMA AVARANA VISHO DHANA VAJRE SVAHA (3X)*

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

f. Actual visualization of Lama Tsongkhapa

g. Invocation Prayer

*From the heart of the savior of the hundred deities of Tushita,
On the peak of a cloud resembling a clump of extremely white fresh curd,
King of Dharma, omniscient Losang Dragpa,
Please come here together with your sons.*

h. Request to Remain for a Long Time

In the sky before me, on a lion throne, lotus, and moon,
My perfect, pure
guru smiles with delight.
Supreme field of merit for my mind of faith,
Please abide for a hundred eons to spread the teachings.

i. Prostration

Your holy mind has the intelligence that understands the full extent
of objects to be known.
Your holy speech, with its excellent explanations, is an ear ornament
for those of good fortune.
Your holy body is radiantly beautiful with glory renowned.
To you, who are meaningful to see, hear, and remember, I prostrate.

j. Offerings

Pleasing drinking water, various flowers,
Fragrant incenses, lights, scented waters, and so forth,
Oceans of cloud-like offerings, both actually arranged and mentally emanated,
I offer to you, the supreme field of merit.

k. Confession

Whatever non virtue of body, speech, and mind,
Especially those opposite to the three vows,
That I have collected from beginningless time,
I confess each and every one with fervent regret from my heart.

l. Rejoicing

You strove for much learning and practice in this degenerate age,

And made your freedoms and riches meaningful
By abandoning the eight worldly concerns.
Savior, we sincerely rejoice in your extensive deeds.

m. Request to Turn the Wheel of Dharma

Perfect, pure, holy gurus, from the billowing clouds of
Wisdom and compassion in the sky of the dharmakaya,
Please let fall a rain of profound and extensive Dharma
Upon the receptacle of those to be subdued, exactly as they need.

n. Dedication

May whatever virtue I have collected
Benefit the teachings and all transmigratory beings,
And, in particular, may it cause the essence of
Perfect, pure Losang Dragpa's teachings to shine forever.

o. 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 we meet the teachings of the Victorious One Losang Dragpa

Who had the morality of an eminently pure way of life

Was courageous in the extensive conduct of the Sons of the Victorious One

And accomplished the Yoga of the two stages of the sacred bliss and emptiness

May all living beings enjoy this pure land!

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAM

*By the merits of having offered this mandala
to Lama Tsongkhapa and his two sons,
may I, my family members and all sentient beings
be able to meet, practice and actualize*

the teachings of the Victorious One Losang Dragpa.

p. Meditation on Lamrim topic

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

Correct devotion to him is the root of the path.

By clearly seeing this and applying great effort,

Please bless me to rely upon him with great respect.

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

Is greatly meaningful, and is difficult to find again,

Please bless me to generate the mind that unceasingly,

Day and night, takes its essence.

This life is as impermanent as a water bubble;

Remember how quickly it decays and death comes.

After death, just like a shadow follows the body,

The results of black and white karma follow.

Finding firm and definite conviction in this,

Please bless me always to be careful

To abandon even the slightest negativities

And accomplish all virtuous deeds.

Seeking samsaric pleasures is the door to all suffering:

They are uncertain and cannot be relied upon.

Recognizing these shortcomings,

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

Led by this pure thought,

Mindfulness, alertness, and great caution arise.

The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha vows:

Please bless me to accomplish this essential practice.

Just as I have fallen into the sea of samsara,

*So have all mother migratory beings.
Please bless me to see this, train in supreme bodhicitta,
And bear the responsibility of freeing migratory beings.*

*Even if I develop only bodhicitta, but I don't practice the three types of morality,
I will not achieve enlightenment.
With my clear recognition of this,
Please bless me to practice the bodhisattva vows with great energy.*

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

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

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

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

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

*In all my lives, never separated from perfect gurus,
May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma.
By completing the qualities of the stages and paths,*

q. Requesting Blessings: Nine-line requesting prayer to Guru Lama Tsongkhapa, accumulation of Migtsema, final request

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)

Please grant me blessings to achieve extensive great wisdom that is able to understand

And explain the meanings of the extensive scriptures without resistance.

I request that the wisdoms of hearing, understanding, and meditation may increase.

I request that the wisdoms of expounding, debating, and writing may be developed.

I request that the general and sublime realizations may be granted.

Please grant me blessings to be quickly like you (3X).

I request that the transcendental wisdom of the simultaneously born great bliss may arise.

I request that the stains of truly believing illusory thought may be purified.

I request that the net of doubts that are only in the mind may be cut off.

Please grant me blessings to be quickly like you (3X).

r. Request to Abide at the Heart

Magnificent and precious root Guru,

Please abide on the lotus seat at my heart,

Guide me with your great kindness,

And grant me the realizations of your holy body, speech, and mind.

Magnificent and precious root Guru,

Please abide on the lotus seat at my heart,

Guide me with your great kindness,

And grant me the supreme and common realizations.

Magnificent and precious root Guru,

Please abide on the lotus seat at my heart,

Guide me with your great kindness,

And remain steadfast until I attain the essence of enlightenment.

s. Dedication

By the force of the victorious one, Tsongkhapa,

Acting as our direct Mahayana virtuous friend in all our lives,

May we never turn away for even a second

From the pure path highly admired by the victorious ones.

May we be able to live a life of pure morality

Listening to many teachings, train in Bodhicitta

and have pure view and conduct

Without polluting or corrupting the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa, the second Victorious One

Glorious Guru

whatever your body, continuum, lifespan or realm

Whatever your supreme or excellent name may be

May I and others become exactly like that

By the force of the praises and requests made to you

May all diseases, evil spirits, poverty, come to an end

May the Dharma and the good fortune increase in the region in which I and others dwell

Please bless us that the life of the glorious Guru be long

May all beings equaling the extend of space have happiness

May I and others without exception

accumulate merits and purify negativities

And may we bless to quickly attain Buddhahood

May I not give rise to heresy for even a second

in regard to the actions of the glorious Guru

May I see whatever actions are done as pure

With this devotion may I receive the Guru's blessings in my heart

For the Dharma King Tsongkhapa, for the Dharma way to flourish

May all signs of obstacles be pacified,

may all conducive conditions be complete

*Due to the two types of merits of all the three times of myself and others may the teachings of
Lobsang Dragpa shine forever.*

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

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

*TADYATHĀ [OM] PAÑCHENDRIYA AVA BODHANĀYE SVĀHĀ / OM DHURU DHURU
JAYA MUKHE SVĀHĀ(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

	<p>Go to bed:</p> <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. -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. -Or try to fall asleep in meditation on emptiness, on deity yoga etc.
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C. Practical advice

Another important thing is, even if you set for a three-hours session, **try to end the session when you are at 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's body. You need to eat properly, rest on time.**

So, try to wake up a bit early. **The best thing 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.

D. 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 practice 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 on the basis of 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 must set the boundaries, but it can be an extended 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.

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

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 Lam Rim Meditation, 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, collection of introductory teachings - 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, Guru Puja, Vajrasattva practice, Samayavajra practice

Ganden Lha Gyalma

Lam Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa

Ornament for the Mahayana sutra, Maitreya

Four Hundred Stanzas, Aryadeva

Middle Length Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa

Tantra bestowing the initiation of Vajrapani

Ten Teachings Sutra

Fifty stanzas on Guru devotion

Lama Tsongkhapa Card, Fpmt Foundation store (cover picture)

Dedication

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.