

## The Uncommon preliminaries to enter Tantra – Ngondro practices

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### The Mandala offering

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## Introduction to the Ngöndros practice

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### I. The common and uncommon preliminaries

#### A. The common preparatory practice

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **B. The uncommon preparatory practice**

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

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

**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.

## **II. Mandala offering practice – In general**

### **A. 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.

### **B. 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.

### **C. 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.**

#### **D. 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.**

#### **E. 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.

### **III. All you need to know to take the essence of the practice during the retreat**

#### **A. 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.

#### **B. 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.**

### **C. 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.**

#### **D. 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 kyj 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*

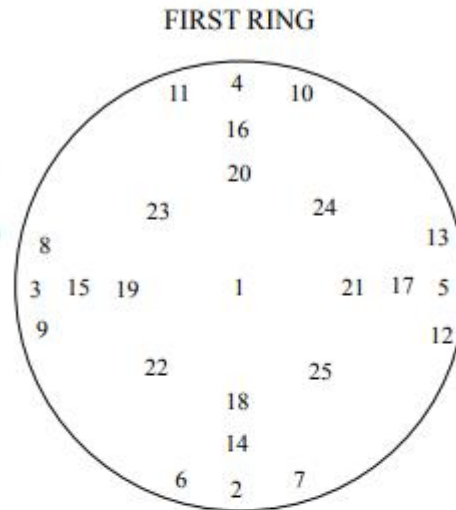
Then, the tradition of the great yogi Drogön Chögyal Phagba, a Sakya Master, has **37 heaps. It is the most used within all four traditions. Even in the FPMT prayer book, we are using it:**

*(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 dän 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 13or in po chhe / tsün 13or 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 dän 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

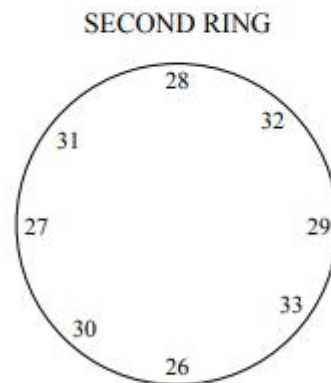
### FIRST RING

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



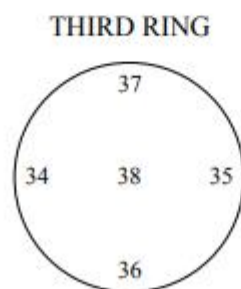
### SECOND RING

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

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 15har 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.

#### **IV. Mandala offering practice retreat**

##### **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)**

### **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 is 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 torma (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.

### **1. Prepare the retreat cushion:**

Drawn a svastika on the floor or on a paper. On top of that, you put one kusha grass with the hair facing behind. On top of that, you put one long-life grass in the same direction than the kusha grass, the grass with a lot of nods. 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** (for an extensive most useful and meaningful explanation cf. [tenzinzopa.com/ebook/ebook/gurudevotion.pdf](http://tenzinzopa.com/ebook/ebook/gurudevotion.pdf), page 75) **to prepare and consecrate the place and your practice.**

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

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

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

Then, you arrange the altar:

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

## **2. Extensive offerings**

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

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

## **3. Right meditation posture**

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

## **4. Visualization of the Merits field**

Visualize the Lam-Rim/Lama Chöpa merit field:

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

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

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

- **Limb of Prostrations :**

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

Then, you place your hands on the center of the crown, to purify all the limitations to actualize the major and minor marks of the Buddha, especially the Ushnisha, Buddha's crown, one of the marks of the Buddha. Then, you place on the forehead, to purify whatever negativities you

accumulated physically and accumulate all the causes to actualize Buddha's holy body. Then, you place them on the throat to purify all the negativities accumulated through your speech, to accumulate all the causes to actualize Buddha's meritorious sound and speech. Then, the last one, placed at the heart purifies all the negativities accumulated through your heart and then accumulate all the causes to achieve Buddha's omniscient enlightened mind.

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

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

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

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

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

That was physical prostration.

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

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

#### - Limb of Offerings

Lama Tsongkhapa keeps on quoting the King of Prayers Sutra:

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

*Unsurpassable offerings are set forth in the stanza:*

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

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

#### - Limb of Confession

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

Every limitation needs to be confessed.

#### - Limb of Rejoicing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### - Limb of Supplication

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

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

You can also dedicate Long-life Retreat, like Amitayus Retreat, Namgyalma Retreat, White Tara Retreat, or daily recitation of White Tara practice in the name of the Guru to fulfill the Limb of the

Supplication. Then, we do that also to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Deities, Dharma protectors, for their blessings to always be closed to us.

- **Limb of Dedication**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Special Request for the Three Great Purposes:

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

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

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

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

At the end, if you know the Guru's name mantra you can recite it 21 times or one mala. Then, you can visualize the Guru absorbing into your heart, cf. detailed explanation of the visualization in the next section dedicated to the prayers in relation to the Guru III.C. Prayers to receive the blessings of the four initiations or empowerments, In the footsteps of the Guru, ebook mentioned earlier [tenzinzopa.com/ebook/ebook/gurudevotion.pdf](http://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](http://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, Samanthabhadra's offering prayer to accumulate merits for the success of the retreat.**

Usually, you would have vajra, bell, and saffron water as well in the vase.

**You can ring the bell while doing the invocation. Sprinkling the water to bless the offerings.**

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

For the texts of the prayers and description of the visualization cf. later in this booklet.

1. **Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta**
2. **Four Immeasurable Prayer**
3. **Invocation Prayer**
4. **Actual Visualization on Lama Tsongkhapa**
5. **Seven-Limb Prayer**
6. **Mandala Offering**
7. **Requesting Blessings**
8. **Glimpse Meditation on Lamrim topic**

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

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

#### **D. The accumulation**

##### **1. 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.

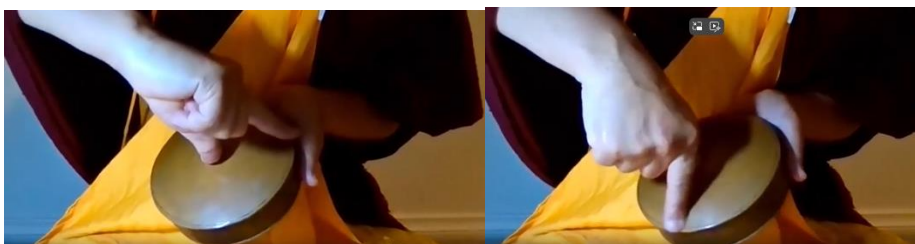
The reason to bless the mandala is to actualize to be able to contain the whole offering you wish to offer: the universe, without the universe to get smaller, to accumulate the merit of actually offering the entire universe.

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.

## 2. 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).

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.**

### **3. 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).

#### **4. 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 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*

- **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).

### **5. 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.**

### **6. 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.

**E. 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.**

#### **V. 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-point meditative posture:**

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

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

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

##### **3. Preliminary prayers, accumulation and dedication**

###### **a. Taking Refuge - Generating Bodhicitta**

*SANG GYÄ CHHÖ DANG TSHOG KYI CHHOG NAM LA*



*I go for refuge until I am enlightened*

JANG CHHUB BAR DU DAG NI KYAB SU CHHI

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

DAG GI JIN SOG GYI PÄI TSHOG NAM KYI

*By my merit from giving and other perfections*

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

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

#### **b. Four Immeasurable Prayer**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **c. Invocation Prayer**

MA LÜ SEM CHÄN KÜN GYI GÖN GYUR CHING

*Savior of all sentient beings without exception,*

DÜ DE PUNG CHÄ MI ZÄ JOM DZÄ LHA

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

NGÖ NAM MA LÜ YANG DAG KHYEN GYUR PÄI

*Perfect knower of all things without exception,*

CHOM DÄN KHOR CHÄ NÄ DIR SHEG SU SÖL

*Bhagavan, together with your retinue, please come here.*

#### **d. Actual Visualization on Lama Tsongkhapa**

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

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

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

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

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

He is dressed in **fully ordained sangha robes** which do not touch his body, but remain about one inch from it, showing the power of his realizations. **Wearing Pandit's hat** in golden yellow color symbolizes the great scholar of a dharma. His aspect is very peaceful. Every atom of his holy body has the power to give realizations.

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

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

#### **e. Seven-Limb Prayer**

GO SUM GÜ PÄI GO NÄ CHHAG TSHÄL LO

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

NGÖ SHAM YI TRÜL CHHÖ TRIN MA LÜ BÜL

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

THOG ME NÄ SAG DIG TUNG THAM CHÄ SHAG

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

KYE PHAG GE WA NAM LA JE YI RANG

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

KHOR WA MA TONG BAR DU LEG ZHUG NÄ

*Please remain until the end of cyclic existence,*

DRO LA CHHÖ KYI KHOR LO KOR WA DANG

*And turn the wheel of Dharma for transmigratory beings.*

DAG ZHÄN GE NAM JANG CHHUB CHHEN POR NGO

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

**f. Mandala Offering**

SA ZHI PÖ KYI JUG SHING ME TOG TRAM

*This ground, anointed with perfume, strewn with flowers,*

RI RAB LING ZHI NYI DÄ GYÄN PA DI

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

SANG GYÄ ZHING DU MIG TE ÜL WA YI

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

DRO KÜN NAM DAG ZHING LA CHÖ PAR SHOG

*May all living beings enjoy this pure land!*

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAM

**g. Requesting Blessings**

*Nine-line requesting prayer to Guru Lama Tsongkhapa*

NGÖ DRUB KÜN JUNG THUB WANG DOR JE CHHANG

*Vajradhara, lord of sages, source of all realizations;*

MIG ME TSE WÄI TER CHHEN CHÄN RÄ ZIG

*Avalokiteshvara, great treasure of non-objectifying compassion;*

DRI ME KHYEN PÄI WANG PO JAM PÄL YANG

*Manjushri, master of stainless wisdom;*

DÜ PUNG MA LÜ JOM DZÄ SANG WÄI DAG

*Vajrapani, destroyer of the entire host of maras;*

GANG CHÄN KHÄ PÄI TSUG GYÄN LO ZANG DRAG

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

KYAB SUM KÜN DÜ LA MA SANG GYÄ LA

*To you, Guru-Buddha embodying the three refuges,*

GO SUM GÜ PÄI GO NÄ SÖL WA DEB

*I make requests showing respect with my three doors.*

RANG ZHÄN MIN CHING DRÖL WAR JIN GYI LOB

*Please grant your blessings to liberate myself and others.*

CHHOG DANG THÜN MONG NGÖ DRUB TSÄL DU SÖL

*Please bestow the supreme and common realizations.*

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

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

#### **h. Glimpse Meditation on Lamrim topic**

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

*TSHÜL ZHIN TEN PA LAM GYI TSA WA RU*

*Correct devotion to him is the root of the path.*

*LEG PAR THONG NÄ BÄ PA DU MA YI*

*By clearly seeing this and applying great effort,*

*GÜ PA CHHEN PÖ TEN PAR JIN GYI LOB*

*Please bless me to rely upon him with great respect.*

*LÄN CHIG NYE PÄI DÄL WÄI TEN ZANG DI*

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

*SHIN TU NYE KA DÖN CHHEN SHE GYUR NÄ*

*Is greatly meaningful, and is difficult to find again,*

*NYIN TSHÄN KÜN TU NYING PO LEN PÄI LO*

*Please bless me to generate the mind that unceasingly,*

*GYÜN CHHÄ ME PAR KYE WAR JIN GYI LOB*

*Day and night, takes its essence.*

*LÜ SOG YO WA CHHU YI CHHU BUR ZHIN*

*This life is as impermanent as a water bubble;*

*NYUR DU JIG PÄI CHHI WA DRÄN PA DANG*

*Remember how quickly it decays and death comes.*

*SHI WÄI JE SU LÜ DANG DRIB MA ZHIN*

*After death, just like a shadow follows the body,*

*KAR NAG LÜ DRÄ CHHI ZHIN DRANG WA LA*

*The results of black and white karma follow.*

*NGE PA TÄN PO NYE NÄ NYE PÄI TSHOG*

*Finding firm and definite conviction in this,*

*THRA ZHING THRA WA NAM KYANG PONG BA DANG*

*Please bless me always to be careful*

*GE TSHOG THA DAG DRUB PAR JE PA LA*

*To abandon even the slightest negativities*

TAG TU BAG DANG DÄN PAR JIN GYI LOB

*And accomplish all virtuous deeds.*

CHÄ PÄ MI NGOM DUG NGÄL KÜN GYI GO

*Seeking samsaric pleasures is the door to all suffering:*

YI TÄN MI RUNG SI PÄI PHÜN TSHOG KYI

*They are uncertain and cannot be relied upon.*

NYE MIG RIG NÄ THAR PÄI DE WA LA

*Recognizing these shortcomings,*

DÖN NYER CHHEN POR KYE WAR JIN GYI LOB

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

NAM DAG SAM PA DE YI DRANG PA YI

*Led by this pure thought,*

DRÄN DANG SHE ZHIN BAG YI CHHEN PO YI

*Mindfulness, alertness, and great caution arise.*

TÄN PÄI TSA WA SO SOR THAR PA LA

*The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha vows:*

DRUB PA NYING POR JE PAR JIN GYI LOB

*Please bless me to accomplish this essential practice.*

RANG NYI SI TSHOR LHUNG WA JI SHIN DU

*Just as I have fallen into the sea of samsara,*

MAR GYUR DRO WA KÜN KYANG DE DRA WAR

*So have all mother migratory beings.*

THONG NÄ DRO WA DRÖL WÄI KHUR KHYER WÄI

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

JANG CHHUB SEM CHHOG JONG PAR JIN GYI LOB

*And bear the responsibility of freeing migratory beings.*

SEM TSAM KYE KYANG TSHÜL THRIM NAM SUM LA

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

GOM PA ME NA JANG CHHUB MI DRUB PAR

*I will not achieve enlightenment.*

LEG PAR THONG NÄ GYÄL SÄ DOM PA LA

*With my clear recognition of this,*

TSÖN PA DRAG PÖ LOB PAR JIN GYI LOB

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

LOG PÄI YÜL LA YENG WA ZHI JE CHING

*Once I have pacified distractions to wrong objects*

YANG DAG DÖN LA TSHÜL ZHIN CHÖ PA YI

*And correctly analyzed the meaning of reality,*

ZHI NÄ LHAG THONG ZUNG DU DREL WÄI LAM

*Please bless me to generate quickly within my mindstream*

NYUR DU GYÜ LA KYE WAR JIN GYI LOB

*The unified path of calm abiding and special insight.*

THÜN MONG LAM JANG NÖ DU GYUR PA NA

*Having become a pure vessel by training in the general path,*

THEG PA KÜN GYI CHHOG GYUR DOR JEI THEG

*Please bless me to enter*

KÄL ZANG KYE BÖI JUG NGOG DAM PA DER

*The holy gateway of the fortunate ones:*

DE LAG NYI DU JUG PAR JIN GYI LOB

*The supreme vajra vehicle.*

DE TSHE NGÖ DRUB NAM NYI DRUB PÄI ZHI

*At that time, the basis of accomplishing the two attainments*

NAM DAG DAM TSHIG DOM PAR SUNG WA LA

*Is keeping pure vows and samaya.*

CHÖ MA MIN PÄI NGE PA NYE GYUR NÄ

*As I have become firmly convinced of this,*

SOG DANG DÖ TE SUNG WAR JIN GYI LOB

*Please bless me to protect these vows and pledges like my life.*

DE NÄ GYÜ DEI NYING PO RIM NYI KYI

*Then, having realized the importance of the two stages,*

NÄ NAM JI ZHIN TOG NÄ TSÖN PA YI

*The essence of the Vajrayana,*

THÜN ZHII NÄL JOR CHHOG LÄ MI YEL WAR

*By practicing with great energy, never giving up the four sessions,*

DAM PÄI SUNG ZHIN DRUB PAR JIN GYI LOB

*Please bless me to realize the teachings of the holy Guru.*

DE TAR LAM ZANG TÖN PÄI SHE NYEN DANG

*Like that, may the gurus who show the noble path*

TSHÜL ZHIN DRUB PÄI DROG NAM ZHAB TÄN CHING

*And the spiritual friends who practice it have long lives.*

CHHI DANG NANG GI BAR DU CHÖ PÄI TSHOG

*Please bless me to pacify completely*

NYE WAR ZHI WAR JIN GYI LAB TU SÖL

*All outer and inner hindrances.*

KYE WA KÜN TU YANG DAG LA MA DANG

*In all my lives, never separated from perfect gurus,*

DRÄL ME CHHÖ KYI PÄL LA LONG CHÖ CHING

*May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma.*

SA DANG LAM GYI YÖN TÄN RAB DZOG NÄ

*By completing the qualities of the stages and paths,*

DOR JE CHHANG GI GO PHANG NYUR THOB SHOG

**i. Accumulation of the mandala offering and dedications**

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

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

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

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

*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"> <li>- walking meditation,</li> <li>- reading or listening to teachings in relation to the retreat topic or Lam-Rim, Lojong</li> </ul> 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"> <li>- Cultivate a mind of rejoicing</li> <li>- Do supplication prayers never to be separated from the care and blessings of Guru Buddha</li> <li>- Express sincere requests to Guru Buddha to always turn the wheel of Dharma until end of samsara for the benefit of all beings.</li> </ul>



	- Do final dedication of the day with Bodhicitta and Emptiness
	<p>Go to bed:</p> <p>-Lay down comfortably on the bed in the reclining Buddha posture.</p> <p>-Set altruistic motivation to undertake sleep time for the benefit of sentient beings.</p> <p>Try to fall asleep by focusing on the natural breathing inhalation and exhalation.</p> <p>-Or better still, fall asleep while doing TongLen practices, i.e. when inhaling, think of taking upon oneself, all the sufferings (and the causes of suffering) of all sentient beings to destroy one's self grasping and self-cherishing; when exhaling, think giving all the happiness and merits of the 3 times to each and every single sentient beings and cause them to abide in the everlasting peace and happiness of full enlightenment.</p> <p>-Or try to fall asleep in meditation on emptiness, on deity yoga etc.</p>

## 2. Practical advices

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

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

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

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

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

**Because after lunch, you may feel a bit loose, try to spend more time on the first and second sessions.** Try to make the third session slightly shorter. Then, regarding the fourth session,

because of the dedication of the day, it may take slightly longer. Therefore, if you are having dinner, try to finish the third session before the sun goes down, for the rest of the day not to be too congested.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**If you receive specific individual instructions from Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche or different Lamas** regarding the accumulation of prayers or mantras, type of practice, or even on the specific time of the retreat, particular place; **then trying to fulfill them is of course the most important in the practice.**

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

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

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

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

**Of, course any retreat should be conducted setting a proper motivation, which is the usual way Bodhicitta motivation 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 and dedication**

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Diagram on the Long Mandala Heaps’ placement, [How to Offer a Mandala | Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive](#)*

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

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

*Fpmt retreat prayers book*

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.