

BUDDHIST MEDITATION

GENERAL INTRODUCTION



JAMBYANG

Jim Clark and Roy Sutherwood 2008

Supporting material for the Buddhist Meditation class at Jamyang Buddhist Centre

Jamyang Buddhist Centre
The Old Courthouse
43 Renfrew Road
London
SE11 4NA

www.jamyang.co.uk

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INTRODUCTION

COURSE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

This material is designed to accompany the Buddhist Meditation course currently running on Monday evenings at the Jamyang Buddhist Centre, London. The class is a one-year, complete introductory course in the practice of meditation comprised of six modules. It is designed to be of interest to those who wish to explore and deepen their meditation practice, as well as to those new to meditation altogether, by introducing six key areas of Buddhist meditation practice.

The handbooks contain some of the key points covered over the course. It is by no means a comprehensive survey of the areas of study. Further supporting material can be found by following up the references and recommended reading at the end of each section. This first handbook contains the general information that relates to any of the modules. The following handbooks deal with the specific information provided during the course. The sections 'One', 'Two', 'Three' etc. found in each handbook roughly correspond to the material given at the corresponding week in each module.

The first four modules deal with practices common to early Buddhism and the later Indo-Tibetan traditions. Module one will deal with the fundamental importance of developing balanced attention through the practice of *shamatha*. This foundation practice empowers the mind and renders it fit and serviceable for the purpose of the meditative path. Practical matters around setting up a daily practice, including time and place for meditation, meditation postures and lifestyle considerations are also discussed.

Using the stability of attention and clarity developed in *shamatha* practice, the second module, *the four foundations of mindfulness*, focuses on developing a capacity for the awareness to come into direct experience with bodily and mental states, so as to come to know them directly, just as they are. Instructions will be based on the important early Buddhist discourse, the *Satipatthana Sutta*.

Module three will introduce the techniques of analysis and explore how thought and the conceptual mind need not necessarily be a hindrance to meditation, and indeed can be utilised and harnessed for developing insight. Themes for contemplation will be introduced, including discursive analysis of the objects of direct awareness cultivated in previous modules. Strategies for dealing with common difficulties will be offered including how to settle the awareness on the experiential conclusion of conceptual analysis.

In the fourth module traditional methods of balancing and cultivating wholesome emotions will be studied and practiced. The classes will primarily be working to develop the four immeasurables or *Brahma viharas*, - love, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity, as found in the early Buddhist teachings.

The last two modules focus on practices distinct to the Mahayana tradition. Developing the 'spirit of enlightenment' or *bodhicitta* will be the subject of the fifth

module, and the principles of the Indo-Tibetan traditions of ‘mind training’ will be introduced. Time will also be given to explore ways of utilizing the human capacity for imagination in meditation and the principles of visualisation practices.

The course concludes in the sixth module with meditation on emptiness. Elements from earlier modules will be brought together to introduce a number of approaches to this meditation, including analytical meditation on emptiness, settling the awareness on the empty nature of mind, and the union of method and wisdom in deity practice.

BUDDHIST MEDITATION

Meditation plays an important role in the Buddhist path. It is the training of attention, awareness, contemplation and insight in order to develop equally the heart and mind. In Buddhism, this training is undertaken in order to overcome the habit and confusion that conditions our lives and creates many emotional, psychological and interpersonal difficulties. This confusion also limits and obscures the boundless and spontaneous wholesome qualities of our hearts and minds. By engaging in Buddhist meditation, one can cut through habit and confusion, and reveal and develop love, compassion and wisdom, the fundamental qualities of the mind.

Engaging in meditation practice one is developing the skills and means by which to take the driving seat in one’s life, to take hold of important elements that determine happiness and wellbeing. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said:

“Meditation is an instrument or technique to shape or transform the mind....Meditation is important as a tool for transforming the mind...we can use it as a means of strengthening our basic good human qualities.”

There are countless methods and techniques, but they all share an important common point. It is similar to learning a musical instrument. By repeatedly returning to the instrument, the music and the practice one becomes more and more familiar with the skill. Similarly, in meditation, one returns again and again to the practice and over time with familiarity one develops in skill and ability:

“The word for meditation in the Tibetan language is ‘gom’, which literally means ‘familiar’. So, meditation is making ourselves familiar with positive states of mind, making our mind familiar with positive thoughts.....The idea of meditation is to make ourselves familiar with more healthy, positive, and helpful ways of thinking, states of mind, patterns of thinking and behaving. And the more we make ourselves familiar with these positive states of mind, the more they will arise easily, naturally, and spontaneously.”

(Kathleen MacDonald / Sangye Khadro)

MEDITATION BASICS

BEGINNING A MEDITATION PRACTICE

Meditation is no different to other things in that if you want to progress, to learn and to see the benefits and outcomes, one has to put in the effort. If meditation is something you want to learn and develop, the best way is to cultivate a regular meditation practice.

If you are new to meditation it is important to remember to cultivate the conditions that make meditation a positive experience for you. If it becomes a chore then you will be far less likely to want to continue. Go for quality over quantity, and strike a balance between finding a space from the usual stress and pressure of daily life on the one hand, and giving yourself encouragement when the inevitable resistance arises.

If you find a lot of resistance, first of all just spend 5-10 minutes setting up your cushions or chair in such a way that you can find a comfortable posture. Then sit in that posture for a few minutes. You don't need to do any more than that. Just try to get into the routine of spending a few minutes getting into the meditation posture. Seek out the qualities of stability, stillness, alertness and relaxation. Notice how these support the same qualities in the mind. This will get you into the healthy habit of finding time to sit.

Whether one is starting as a beginner or continuing a well established practice, engaging in the training of meditation is about cultivating and maintaining a healthy habit. The more one can give of oneself to the practice the greater the chances of experiencing the fruits.

TIME AND PLACE

If you do not already have a daily practice then begin to think about what time of day might be best suited for you to have some time out from your other activities. Different people find different times of the day more suited to their dispositions and the patterns of their daily life to sit quietly and meditate.

The time of day that one practices will depend on personal preferences and circumstances. Early morning is a popular time to sit before the mind has had a chance to get into its busy planning and thinking about the day, and before environmental noise begins. On the other hand, many people find the evening a better time for them, with a sit before going to bed to settle the mind at the end of the day. It can be helpful to identify a time during the day where external noises are likely to be less.

If possible, it is useful to find a place that one can be undisturbed by usual distractions such as the TV, computer, telephone calls etc. This might, for example, be a small area in a spare room or your bedroom. If you find it is a support, you might want to

make a small altar or place nearby an image or some books that inspire you to practice. You could light a candle or burn some incense.

An accomplished meditator will not be so affected by environmental changes and may be able to sustain their practice in the midst of their daily life in a busy urban setting. Indeed, one of the key aims of meditation is to gain an understanding that enables one to live with a full engagement with all of life, from a place of peace, understanding and compassion. The objective is not to isolate oneself and hide away from life in fear of distraction and distress, absorbed in a selfish state of bliss; through meditation it is said that one can develop the strength to be with all of life's difficulties without one's inner understanding and calm becoming disturbed. However, until one has reached such a point it can often be useful for meditators in training to create the right environmental conditions that support the practice.

DURATION OF SESSIONS

When starting out try to find a balance between a session long enough for the mind to settle into the practice but to be able to stay fresh and not get fatigued, frustrated and tired – perhaps 10-15 minutes once or twice a day.

Aim for quality rather than quantity. If one has time and enthusiasm for more you could take a break and then have another short sit. Be careful not to overdo it with initial enthusiasm – the lasting benefits of the practice tend to come from the longer term commitment to practice rather than the 'flash-in-the-pan' kind of enthusiasm.

However, don't sell yourself short! Check to see if you feel you are getting up too soon off the cushion. Like any practice, one needs to find the edge of one's ability and work with it.

Structure and pattern to practice can be very helpful but one also needs flexibility. Don't be too rigid. It is good to have an aim and a guideline to one's daily commitment, but if circumstances force a change, it's fine to respond to that. If one can only manage one sit a day, or one sit every few days, one should be happy with that. Meditation should not become yet another obligation and a chore!

Remember that meditation is like anything else, what you get out is what you put in.

POSTURES FOR MEDITATION

The Buddha taught that the physical body is the physical support for the mind. The creation of a stable physical posture is the best way to allow the mind to come to rest. We need to have a posture which allows the mind to remain both *relaxed* and *alert* simultaneously.

There are a number of ways one can sit, but what is most important is that your spine is straight without being strained, that supports a sense of stability in the posture, and most importantly, that one is able to physically relax throughout the entire body. It can take time to find a posture into which one can fully relax and it is worth giving the attention to finding a good and comfortable posture. Once one has found a good posture the benefits are self evident: the stability, balance and relaxation support the same qualities in the mind.

A very simple two-point posture guideline is:

1. Keep the spine as straight as possible.
2. Allow the rest of your body to be as loose and relaxed as possible. Feel for a sense of relaxed awareness and rest comfortably in it.

If you would like a more detailed guideline there is a traditional instruction on the meditation posture called ‘the seven point posture of Vairochana’:

1. The legs are crossed. Vairochana sits in the traditional asana that statues of Buddha can be seen sitting in where the legs are crossed and each foot is placed on the top of the thigh on the opposite leg. For many people this is very hard to achieve and must be approached with care. If it is painful it is best not to force it to avoid injury; simply seek a position in the legs that is comfortable and provides a stable base.
2. The eyes are neither made to gape open, nor are they closed. Their lids are half-lowered, and the gaze is slightly lowered following the direction of the tip of nose. The reason for this is that if your eyes are gaping wide open, and you are looking outward, then your mind will follow visual perception. On the other hand, if your eyes are closed, you become torpid. This is a happy medium between the two extremes of gaze.
3. The back or spine is straight, and one sits upright. It can be very helpful to experiment with the cushion you sit on. The one under your seat is looking to position the hips so the lower back can come forward and allow the spine to find its natural position. It can therefore be helpful to make the back of the cushion a little higher than the front so there is a slight tilt in the cushion that is lower towards the front edge that is nearest your feet.
4. The shoulders are even and relaxed. This means that one is not sitting with one shoulder higher than the other, but that they are at the same height.
5. The neck is slightly hooked or bent. Not to an excessive degree; the chin is brought in slightly.
6. The lips and teeth are slightly parted. The mouth is not clamped shut.
7. The tongue is touching the palate. This refers not to the entire tongue, but the tip or front of the tongue.

You will notice that in this description there is no mention made of what to do with the hands. The traditional meditation posture for the hands is to rest them palm facing upwards with the right in the palm of the left and the tips of the thumbs gently touching. The main point is that the hands are brought to relax evenly in the lap or on the knees.

The following is a general list of some common postures used for meditation:

- Vajra (commonly known as ‘the lotus posture’) – as in the seven points posture of Vairochana (see above) where the legs are crossed and the foot of one leg is lifted and placed to rest on the opposite inner thigh, and vice versa with the other foot. This is the very traditional posture but must only be done with care. If one does not have the flexibility it can cause serious injury to the

knee joints. A good yoga teacher can give instructions on how to approach this pose.

- Half Lotus – similar to the above posture but where only one foot is raised and the other remains on the floor as in ordinary crossed leg position.
- The Burmese or Tailor’s posture – one is sitting on the floor on a cushion as if in a crossed leg posture but with one leg in front of the other with the feet exposed and in front of each other rather than under the thighs.
- Informal cross-legged – like children sit at school.
- Kneeling Japanese-style, with or without support – one can use a cushion to kneel astride or can rest on the backs of the lower legs without a cushion.
- Sitting on a chair – if possible, try to sit towards the front of the chair seat so the spine is not leaning on the back of the chair but rather is supporting itself, straight and upright. Place the feet squarely on the floor in front.
- Lying down in the corpse posture – lying on your back with legs either straight or bent at the knees, whatever is comfortable for your back. Arms lying straight and with a little distance from the body. This posture is especially helpful for relaxing and releasing mental and bodily tension.
- Standing – keep your eyes open and the feet firmly placed on the ground.
- Walking – this will be explained in more detail in the second module.

STRUCTURES AND SUPPORTS

THE THREE STAGES OF A PRACTICE

It is said that for a Buddhist meditation practice to be complete the minimum in terms of structure is the three stages of:

1. Motivation
2. The actual practice
3. Dedication

At the start of the practice we connect with the motivation for meditating. This makes the activity conscious. Ordinarily we engage in so many of our daily activities out of habit or on autopilot; we are often hardly present when we are doing things. Whatever we are doing, be it eating a meal, driving the car, or doing the washing, usually we do so absentmindedly. Because we don't give our full present attention to the task in hand we can be absent for whole periods in the day. Therefore at the start of the meditation we make the effort to engage in the practice with full awareness of what we are doing. A Buddhist practitioner will recite the lines of taking refuge (see prayers at end of this section) in order to orient the motivation with the Buddhist view and generate an appropriate aspiration to practice. A meditator that is not a Buddhist can still use the time at the beginning to cultivate a positive and meaningful aspiration for the practice in order to make it a conscious and worthwhile activity.

In the middle is the actual practice. This can be any meditation practice, such as shamatha, loving kindness, insight meditation, deity yoga, recitation of mantra etc. This structure can also be followed while reading and studying the dharma; after generating a motivation then engage with the reading and contemplation.

Lastly conclude with dedication. This is referred to as 'dedicating the merit'. Here, merit is simply the good energy, insight and fruits of the practice we have created by doing it. We do this by returning to our initial motivation for practice and to then renew the aspiration that the practice help us reach those aspirations. This helps to put a firm imprint in the mind so that the positive benefits of meditation are not lost. From a Buddhist perspective the best dedication is to dedicate for the welfare of others. On a simple level it is a skilful way of countering, rather than increasing, the self grasping that meditation is trying to reduce. In Mahayana Buddhism the dedication is for bodhicitta and acts as an important cause for full enlightenment. This is discussed further in the bodhicitta module.

THE SIX PREPARATORY PRACTICES

Meditation is like many other activities in that preparation can be very helpful. All Buddhist traditions have practices that are designed to create the ideal causes and conditions for practice by creating a conducive environment and enable the meditator to connect with the right energy and focus. This is sometimes described as creating

‘merit’. Although seen as a support for practice, these ritual elements often fully integrated and become a part of the practice itself.

Lama Tsongkhapa outlines a traditional set of preparatory practices one can use before any meditation or study session designed to optimise the effort and time spent in meditation. They deal with practical issues such as making a clear, clean space for practice; psychological preparation in terms of cultivating a clear motivation for the practice; and the practices of creating ‘merit’ and clearing obstacles to the practice.

These 6 practices are:

1. Clean the room well and set up representations of the Body, Speech and Mind of the Buddhas.
2. Seek offerings by honest means, and set them out in a beautiful arrangement – eight offerings, seven water bowls – before images of the Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, also representing the body, speech and mind of the Buddha.
3. Sit in meditation posture and take refuge and generate bodhicitta. Engage in the four immeasurable thoughts and cultivate special intention.
4. Visualise clearly the ‘merit field’.
5. Train in the Seven-Limbed practice to accumulate merits and purify obscurations: 1) Prostrations; 2) Offerings; 3) Confession; 4) Rejoicing; 5) Requesting teachings; 6) Requesting Buddhas to remain, and 7) Dedications.
6. Offer the mandala and pray repeatedly and fervently, requesting inspiration and blessings to stop unhelpful states of mind and cultivate helpful states of mind relative to the practice of meditation

If we do all of this before meditation, it makes our meditation much more meaningful. We clearly know and remind ourselves of what we want to accomplish.

LIFESTYLE CONSIDERATIONS

There is a two-way feedback between formal meditation practice and one’s experience in daily life. We usually expect that meditation will have some kind of positive impact on our lives. It works the other way too; what one does in daily life will usually find its way into one’s practice.

As we become more familiar with meditation, we begin to notice in our daily lives just how chaotic our minds are and how frequently we are distracted from tasks we undertake. When we can apply what we learn in meditation we become more present and less distracted.

However, if in daily life we make no attempt to become aware of old patterns, and continue to be easily distracted into fantasies, judgements and ideation, then this will reinforce the power of this habit and we will continue to experience it in meditation.

Unfortunately meditation is not a magic pill. Like most prescriptions for health we need to consider a wider context to our practice. If we want the benefits of meditation to be felt in our lives, it is useful to have some consideration of our behaviour between meditation sessions. Essentially this involves what can be understood as a kind of ethical guidance. It is not that one must adopt a belief system or set of

prescribed values in order to meditate, rather it is a pragmatic look at what supports our practice, what supports calm, relaxation and ease.

Consider two things. Firstly, one can look into one's own experience and see which conditions support the development of physical and mental well being, and which do not. For example, how do the following influence the mental state: eating a healthy diet, getting restful sleep, speaking kind, honest words, or being mindful vs. poor nutrition, exhaustion, heavy intoxication, deceiving or hurting others with harmful speech and actions, or being distracted and mindless?

Secondly, it can be useful to bring clearly to mind the motivation for practicing meditation in order to contact a genuine incentive to practice. If we value meditation then it will be easier to make a change or sacrifice in our lifestyle if one feels it may be needed.

We don't need to be in a hurry to change lots of things in our lives. Better to start where we are now. The first thing to do is take stock, make an assessment. When we know through our own experience that, for example, good sleep supports good early morning meditation, and if we value meditation, then we can think about how we will try to make that happen more often.

CONTINUING IN THE PRACTICE

The higher realisations that can be attained through Buddhist meditation are profound and far-reaching. For example, even the 'mundane' *siddhis*, the results of attaining shamatha where one is able to effortlessly focus the attention at will for any length of time with undistracted clarity, are quite remarkable. To achieve this requires a serious commitment to practice and periods of intensive training in retreat conditions. However, even just a little of this practice in daily life can bring remarkable benefits. It can bring a degree of balance and calm to a mind that otherwise fluctuates between compulsive thinking and fatigue. It also prepares the mind for other meditation practices which open up our possibility for experiencing love, compassion and understanding.

Whether we undertake practice in retreat or in daily life, one of the key factors will be consistency and regularity. The resistance to sit can sometimes be very strong. At such times the ability to continue with the practice, irrespective of whether it is easy or difficult, will be one of the main determinants of success. The following are some tips on cultivating perseverance and maintaining a regular practice:

- Do something rather than nothing. If you find a lot of resistance, just get in the posture for a few minutes once or twice a day. Don't even think about 'meditating'.
- Give time to finding a good posture. Experiment with different cushions, seating positions. Look for the qualities of body that support the mind: stability and stillness, alertness and relaxation.
- It is not necessary to meditate for very long periods of time. Follow the "Short, many times" advice both on the cushion and off it – use a timer if you want. Quality is always better than quantity, keeping the mind as clear, radiant and vivid as possible. Not ending the meditation in heavy, dull resentment, we generate enthusiasm for the next session.

- Recognise resistance, dullness, distraction, boredom or whatever state of the mind for what it is: simply a mind state that will pass.
- Have a sense of perseverance based on patience and kindness. Remind yourself difficulties are expected and the ability to patiently endure them without aversion or agitation will only strengthen your practice and help you in your daily life.
- Modify your methods intelligently. Be flexible and kind to yourself. Try to come to the meditation without a lot of attachment or aversion to any aspect of the experience, not fantasising about good results or getting hung-up on bad experiences that may arise.
- Have some sanity and flexibility to your routine. Don't let it become yet another mechanical habit or heavy chore.
- Take an interest, delight and enjoyment in it. Read about practice or go to inspiring talks. Think about why you are interested in meditation. Become clear about the value and benefit of meditation compared to other activities.
- Make a clean comfortable space for it, attractive for the purpose, in however modest a way.
- Try keeping a simple, short but accurate meditator's diary and use it to review, understand and improve your practice. Look for helpful patterns.
- Keep going – *“just do it”!*

RITUAL AND PRAYER

THE ROLE OF RITUAL AND PRAYER

The role and function of prayer and ritual in Buddhism is varied and complex. Attitudes to prayer and ritual, as well as its theoretical underpinnings also vary enormously according to the dispositions, inclinations, culture, time, place and understanding of all practitioners since the time of the Buddha.

Some people are drawn instinctively towards the ritual elements of practice and feel very comfortable with it while others find it to be less appealing. For some it carries connotations of religiosity that they do not connect with, yet others find it brings alive the devotional aspect of practice that can be a very helpful benefit to the practice. It is for you to decide if you would like to explore and cultivate this element of meditation.

Creating a shrine can be a good support for a daily practice. Some find the process of physically setting up images and making offerings an aid in focusing the attention and developing devotion. However, it is not compulsory. If you have an interest you can explore it in much the same way you can explore meditation practices. Try it out and whatever you find helpful you can adopt.

Reciting prayers can be an effective way of focusing the mind into a specific topic or theme. When reciting prayers it is important to try to maintain a connection with the meaning so the words actually move the heart and mind. If you find you are simply reciting the words without connecting with them there may be very little benefit. As the Buddha said:

“Better than a thousand meaningless verses
Is one meaningful line of verse
Which, when having been heard,
Brings peace.

Better than reciting a hundred meaningless verses
Is one line of Dharma
Which, having been heard,
Brings peace.”

(The Dhammapada)

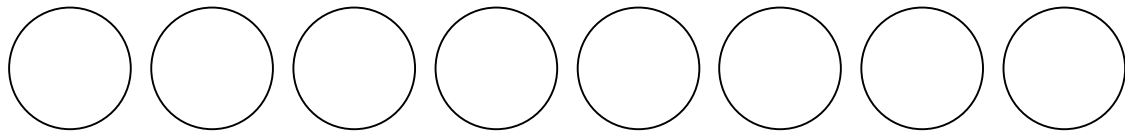
TENDING A SHRINE

A Buddhist shrine can be very elaborate, or very simple and they are traditionally found in temples and Buddhist households. The basic elements of a shrine include representations of the body, speech and mind of the Buddha, by a painting or statue of the Buddha, a Buddhist text, and a *stupa* respectively. Simpler still, an image of a Buddha can encompass these three.

A shrine is usually positioned so that the Buddha takes a raised centre position on some kind of shelf elevated from the floor, ideally at head height (when sitting) or higher. If one has a text and a *stupa* the text will be placed on the Buddha's left and *stupa* on his right. One can also place pictures of teachers that inspire one to practice or to cultivate good qualities through meditation and practice, and are best placed a little lower than the central Buddha image.

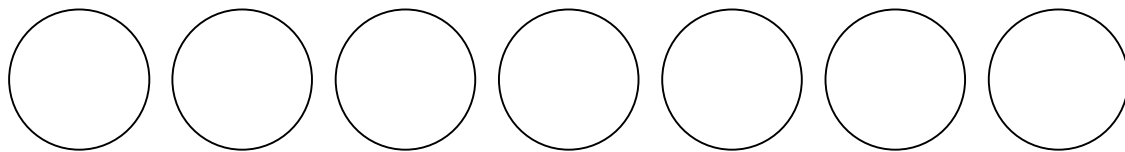
When making offerings there are many variations according to different traditions. Two very common sets of offerings found in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition are the 8 offerings and the 7 water offerings. The 8 offerings are: two bowls of water – one for drinking and one for washing the feet, flowers, incense, lights (such as a candle), perfume, food and music. All offerings should be the best quality one can afford, be fresh and sourced honestly – that is they should not be stolen or acquired by deceit.

The 8 offerings



Drinking water Foot-washing water Flowers Incense Lights (candle) Perfume Food Music

The 7 water offerings



Water Water Water Water Water Water Water

All offerings should be set up in front of (and preferably a little lower than) a Buddha image, and each bowl in which the offerings are made should be of good quality, placed in a neat row, evenly spaced and no more than a few millimetres apart (traditionally it is described as a rice grain-width).

When setting up the offerings one works from left to right, and when taking them down one does so in the reverse order – from right to left. You start by having the bowls upturned on the shrine. Take some lit incense and circle it in the upturned bowl

three times saying 'OM AH HUNG', the essence mantra of the Buddha's body, speech and mind, to purify the container in preparation for receiving the offerings.

Leave offering bowls upturned until a substance is placed in it so that you are not offering an empty bowl. When laying out the offerings, place at least a little of the substance into the bowl before placing it right side up on the shrine. It is considered better to fill the water offerings as near to the top as you can without spilling it in the spirit of generosity. As each bowl is filled say 'OM AH HUNG' again to bless the offerings.

When all the offerings are laid out make three prostrations and then mentally and verbally offer them. If you are following in the six preparatory practices it can be done in the offering section of the seven-limb-prayer.

Another point to remember is that the physical offerings that are made, whether it is as described above, more elaborate, or a simple flower or candle, the substance can act as the basis for much more extensive imagined offerings. It is best if you can join the practice of offering with your understanding of emptiness by contemplating that the person making the offering, the substance offered, the action of offering, and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that you are making the offering to are all empty of inherent existence.

PRAYERS FOR MEDITATION

Refuge and Bodhicitta

I go for refuge until I am enlightened
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme
Assembly.
By the merits I create by generosity and other far
reaching attitudes,
May I become a Buddha in order to benefit all sentient
beings

sang gye cho dang sog kyi chog nam la
jang chub bar du dag ni kyab su chi
dag gi chin sog gyi pe so nam gyi
dro la pen chir sang gye drub par shog

The Four Immeasurables – short version

May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes,

sem chen tam che day wa dang day way gyu
dang par gyur chig

May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its
causes,

sem chen tam che dug ngel dang dug ngel kyi
guy dan drel war gyur chig

May all sentient beings never be separated from
sorrowless bliss,

sem chen tam che dug ngel may pay day wa
dang mi drel war gyur chig

May all sentient beings abide in equanimity, free of
bias, attachment and anger.

sem chen tam che nye ring chag dang nyi
dang drel way dang nyom la nay par gyur
chig

The Four Immeasurables – long version

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were
to abide in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and
anger. May they abide in this way. I shall cause them
to abide in this way. Guru-deity, please inspire me to
be able to do so.

sem chen tam che nye ring chag dang dang
drel way tang nyom la ne chi ma rung / ne par
gyur chig / ne par dag gi ja wo / day tar je nu
par la ma lha jin gyl lab tu sol

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings had
happiness and its causes. May they have these. I shall
cause them to have these. Guru-deity, please inspire
me to be able to do so.

sem chen tam che day wa dang day way gyu
dang den na chi ma rung / den par gyur chig /
den par dag gi ja wo / day tar je nu par la ma
lha jin gyi lab tu sol

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were
free from suffering and its causes. May they be free. I
shall cause them to be free. Guru-deity, please inspire
me to be able to do so.

sem chen tam che dug ngal dang dug ngal gyi
gyu dang dral na chi ma rung / dral war gyur
chig / dral war gyur chig / dral war dag gi ja
wo / day tar je nu par la ma lha jin gyi lab tu
sol

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were
never parted from upper rebirth and liberation's
excellent bliss. May they never be parted. I shall cause
them to never be parted. Guru-deity, please inspire me
to be able to do so.

sem chen tam che to ri dang tar pay day wa
dam pa dang ma dral na chi ma rung / mi dral
war gyur chig / mi dral wa dag gi ja wo / day
tar je nu par la ma lha jin gyi lab tu sol

Special Altruistic Intention

Especially for the sake of all mother sentient beings, I must quickly, and more quickly – in this very life – attain the precious state of complete and perfect buddhahood. Therefore I shall practice the profound path of guru-deity yoga.

key par ma sem chen tam che kyi don du nyur
wa nyur war yang dag par dzog pay sang gye
kyi go pang rin po che chi nay kyang tob par
ja / day chir du lam zab mo la ma lhay nal jor
nyam su lang war gyi wo

Seven Limb Prayer

Reverently I prostrate with my body, speech and mind,
And present clouds of every type of offering, actual and mentally transformed.
I confess all my negative actions accumulated since beginningless time,
And rejoice in the virtues of all holy and ordinary beings.
I dedicate all the virtues of myself and others to the great enlightenment.

go sum gu pay go nay chag tsal lo
ngo sham yi trul cho trin ma lu bul
tog may ne sak dig tung tam che shag
key pa gay wa nam la je yi rang
kor wa ma tong bar du leg zhug nay
dro la cho kyi kor lo kor wa dang
dag zhen gay nam jang chub chen por ngo

Long Mandala Offering

OM vajra ground AH HUM, mighty golden ground.
OM vajra fence AH HUM, the iron fence around the edge, In the centre is Mount Meru, the king of mountains, In the east the continent Lupapo
In the south Dzambuling, In the west Balangcho, In the north Draminyan, In the east are the sub-continent Lu and Lupag, In the south Ngayab and Ngayabzhan, In the west Yodan and Lamchogdro, In the north Draminyan and Draminyan Gyida.
Here are the precious mountain, The wish-granting tree
The wish-fulfilling cow, The unploughed harvest.
Here are the precious wheel, The precious jewel, The precious queen, The precious minister, The precious elephant, The precious horse, The precious general, The great treasure vase.
Here are the goddess of beauty, The goddess of garlands, The goddess of song, The goddess of dance, The goddess of flowers, The goddess of incense, The goddess of light, The goddess of perfume.
Here are the sun, The moon, The precious parasol, The banner of victory in all directions.
In the centre are the most perfect riches of gods and humans, with nothing missing, pure and delightful.
To my glorious, holy and most kind root guru, the lineage gurus, and in particular *to the great Lama Tzong Khapa, Buddha who is the king of sages, Vajradhara, and the entire assembly of deities*, I offer these as a Buddha-field. Please accept them with compassion, for the sake of migrating beings. Having accepted them, please bestow upon me and on mother sentient beings abiding as far as the limits of space your inspiration with loving compassion.

om vajra bhumi ah hum, wang chen ser gyi sa zhi
om vajra rekhe ah hum, chi chag ri kor yug gi kor way u su
ri gyal por ri rab, shar lu pag po, lho dzam bu ling, nup ba lang cho, jang dra mi nyan lu dang lu pag, nga yap dang nga yap zhan, yo dan dang lam chog dro, dra mi nyan dang dra mi nyan gyi da
rin po che ri wo, pag sam gyi shing, do joi ba, ma mo pa yi lo tog
kor lo rin po che, nor bu rin po che tsun mo rin po che long po rin po che lang po rin po che ta chog rin po che mag pon rin po che ter chen poi bum pa
gek ma, treng wa ma, lu ma, gar ma, may tog ma, dug po ma, nag sal ma, dri chap ma nyi ma, da wa, rin po che dug
chog la nam par gyal way gyal tsan, u su lha dang mi pal jor pun sum tsog pa ma tsang wa may pa / tzang zhing yi du wong wa di dag drin chen tza wa dang gyu par / che pay pal dan la ma dam pa nam dang / kye par du yang
la ma lo zang tub wang dor je chang, chen po lha tsog kor dang che pa nam la zhing kam bul war gyio / tug je dro way don du zhe su sol / zhe nay kyang dag sog dro wa mar gyur nam kay ta dang nyam pay sem chen tam che la / tug tze wa / chen poi go ne jin gyi lab tu sol

Short Mandala Offering

This ground, anointed with perfume, flowers strewn,
Mount Meru, four lands, sun and moon,
Imagined as a Buddha land and offered to you
May all beings enjoy this pure land.

sa zhi po kyi jug shing may tog tram
ri rab ling zhi nyi day gyan pa di
sang gye zhing du mig tay ul war gyi
dro kun nam dag zhing la cho par shog

Inner Mandala Offering

The objects of attachment, aversion and ignorance –
friends, enemies and strangers, my body, wealth and
enjoyments – I offer these without any sense of loss.
Please accept them with pleasure and inspire me and
others to be free from the three poisonous attitudes.

dag gi chag dang mong sum kye pay yul
dra nyen bar sum lu dang long cho chay
pang pa may par bul gyi leg zhe nay
dug sum rang sar drol war jin gyi lob

Idam guru ratna mandala kam nirya tayami

idam guru ratna mandala kam nirya tayami

Requesting Inspiration

The eyes through whom the vast scriptures are seen,
supreme doors for the fortunate who would cross over
to spiritual freedom, illuminators whose wise means
vibrate with compassion, to the entire line of spiritual
masters I make requests.

rab jam sung rab kun la ta way mig
kal zang tar par dro pay jug ngog chog
tse way kyo pay tab kay dzay pa yi
sal dzay shay nyen nam la sol wa deb

Dedication Prayers

Due to this merit may I soon
Attain the enlightened state of a Guru-Buddha
That I may be able to liberate
All sentient beings from their sufferings

May the precious bodhi mind
Not yet born arise and grow
May that born have no decline
But increase for ever more

gay wa di yi nyur du dag
la ma sang gye drub gyur nay
dro wa chig kyang ma lu pa
kye kyi sa la go par shog

jang chub sem chog rin po che
ma kye pa nam kye gyur chig
kye pa nyam pa may pa yang
gong nay gong du pel war shog

Long life prayers

For HH Dalai Lama

In the land encircled by snow mountains
You are the source of all happiness and good
All powerful Chenrezig, Tenzin Gyatso
Please remain until samsara ends

gang ri ra way kor way zhing kam dir
pan dang de wa ma lu jung way nay
chen re sig wang ten zin gya tso yi
zhap pay si te bar du ten gyur chig

For Lama Zopa Rinpoche

You who uphold the subduer's moral way
Who serve as the bountiful bearer of all
Sustaining, preserving and spreading Manjunath's
victorious doctrine
Who masterfully accomplish magnificent prayers
honouring the three jewels
Protector of myself and others, your disciples: please,
please live long.

thub zhul chang zhing jam gon gyal wai tan
dzin kyo pel way kun zo dog por dzay
chog sum kur way leg mon tu drub pa
dag sog dul jay gon du zhab ten shog

RECOMMENDED READING

Kathleen McDonald (Sangye Khadro) 'How To Meditate: A Practical Guide'.
Wisdom Publications

Also check out Alex Berzin's website: www.berzinarchives.com

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