



TEACHING ON 26 JULY 2016

IN THIS ISSUE

LET'S SHARE...

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(Reading from *Norbu Choling Prayer Book*)

Sang-gye cho-dang tsog-kyi chog-nam-la.

Jang-chup ber-du dag-ni kyab-su-chi

Da-gi jin-sok gyi-pay tsog-nam-kyi

Dro-la phen-chir sang-gye drub-per-shog

This is the refuge prayer. Whatever prayers we do, first we have to take refuge in the Three Jewels. Then, we have a prayer of Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga Gaden Lhagyama. At the end of this prayer, we offer a short mandala prayer. We visualize the mandala in our hands as huge as a mountain and we offer the king of mountain to our Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Sa zhi pö kyì 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 NIRYA
TAYAMI

After this the short mandala offering, we have a short prayer of Migtsema. This is a special prayer by Lama Tsongkhapa.

Lama Tsongkhapa wrote this prayer and offered to his Guru Jetsun Rendawa. His Guru said that it was not suitable for him and changed his own name Jetsun Rendawa to Tsongkhapa in line four and gave the prayer back to him.

The first line refers to Chenrezig (compassion), second line refers to Manjusri (wisdom), and third line refers to Vajrapani (clearing obstacles /mara). This is a powerful mantra to recite and dedicate to all mother sentient beings:

Mig- may tse -way ter- chen Chen- Re- Zig

Dri-may khyen-pay wong-po Jam-Pel-Yang

Do-ping ma-lu jon-zay Sang-Way-Dag

Gang-chen khay-pay tsug-gyen Tsong-kha-pa

Lo-sang drag-pay shab-la sol-wa-deb

All mother sentient beings are very kind. Mother sentient beings means once in our life we have been each other's parents. That is why we cannot disturb other human beings. Without human beings we cannot survive. How many past lives we have we don't know

BASIC VAJRAYANA PRACTICES & OFFERINGS

How do I start?

right? Therefore, in the morning when we wake up we just say, today, oh! I am alive I am not going to waste my time so I am going to the temple to pray for all mother sentient beings. All the mother sentient beings are very kind to me without mother sentient beings I cannot survive. That is why I pray for them.

What am I going to pray? I will pray for all mother sentient beings to bring them into Buddhahood. It is not necessary to mention names. Some people think I am here to pray for my father, my mother, my children or myself but all mother sentient beings means including yourself and everyone. We should think, I am working for all mother sentient beings who always has suffering, some have less suffering and others have heavy suffering and that is why we are offering prayers.

Prayers can be done from your mind. There is no need to spend money and in a short time you can think and pray for all mother sentient beings. You can think that all mother sentient beings have been very kind to us and that is why I want to help all mother sentient beings to become a Buddha and remove their suffering.

When you are doing charity. For example, when you are going to help

the old folks, just think from your mind, I don't need any single name or spend a single cent, I will just go there and help. Help them from your heart and keep your mind pure. Don't think that, "I will have a name or people will invite me for more charities etc."

If one is doing 100,000 offerings of rice, fruits with many other things bringing in a big lorry into an old folks home and he feels good and show off this action then is a wrong view. If people are offering that way and we saw this action, we have to rejoice and not feel jealous. If we rejoice strongly when someone is offering like that, we get equal merit. This is important to note about when offering items.

We can offer whatever we want, it does not matter but always offer from your heart. It is not necessary to come out with so much. If you only have 5 or 10 cents then think, I only have 5 cents to offer for the benefit of all mother sentient beings. There are so many people suffering from hunger, may this 5 cents benefit them. With 5 cents you cannot buy anything right? But when you use your mind to think like that you can gain so much merit. It is not necessary to spend from your pocket, you can use your mind to gain so much merit in your merit account. This is what you can always do when offering items, during charity or whatever you do. If you have enough money you can offer as much as you can but if you don't give anything at all then you will be reborn as a hungry ghost. Because when one is stingy, one is reborn in the hungry ghost realm.

Then just go and help like washing things etc. and if people are not happy sometimes, give us trouble or anger – never mind, just leave it, it doesn't matter. We should think, give me more trouble or anger, it doesn't matter because I want to use compassion. During the Buddha time, nobody was disturbing them, they wanted someone to disturb them as they wanted to use their compassion. Now more people are disturbing but there is less compassion.

Compassion how to use it? When people disturb us, just don't mind. Just

use compassion towards them. Whatever good things or help we do, comes problems, of course. People say, "I am doing more good things and I am having more problems." Because our merits are not enough. That is why we need to do more work in charities, prayers etc.

Don't lose your mind instead rejoice! We should think, I rejoice because I have done so many offering items, so many prayers. In the morning you have already thought about helping all mother sentient beings right? So even if throughout the whole day, you didn't do anything but your merits will be very strong. Before you sleep, think about what you did the whole day. People often ask, "Once I die where I am born? I always practice Buddhism so I definitely will be born as a human being." There is no such thing.

Therefore, before you sleep think about what you did the whole day, this is the same as before we die we will know what we did our whole life – what are wrong things we did and the good things we have done. If we did wrong then we have to regret whatever wrong doings and if we did good things, we have to rejoice!

Think: Today I did so many things and I feel so happy. I had many opportunities to do good things.



Buddha gave me time to help other beings (you also can think like that).

If you did some wrong, thinking that I have done a wrong thing today, if I am alive tomorrow I will not do it again. - It reduces the sin. Slowly, slowly your mind will automatically change into a peaceful state.

"Ok, today I did my meditation and tomorrow everything will be ok." It is not like that! It has to be slowly and step by

step. In Singapore, work has to be done fast but dharma has to be done slowly.

What I need to do when I am in a temple? Who are we going to pray to? What I need to do? What can I offer? Some people say, "I want to offer flowers. What are flowers for? I want to offer incense. What is incense for? I want to offer candles. What are candles for?" Some people think like this and some people can ask you also, "What are you doing? What benefits do you get?"

When you go into a temple for prayers, your motivation is important. Once you step inside the temple, see this as a Buddha land. This area actually looks very small, statues are also small but you think that you are seeing Buddha Shakyamuni's palace which is very huge, very nice and very precious with all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas surrounding this temple.

What is the benefit of a statue? Why do we need to spend money on Buddha's statues? If we have enough money then we have to spend! If we do not have enough money to buy a statue then even a picture is fine. Now it is common to have pictures of a lot of deities inside a mobile phone, so you can also use that. But if you have enough, buy some statues and offering items. We can imagine a statue to be the real Buddha.

Why is it a real Buddha? It is made of copper, this is brass, this is silver and that is gold – how can it be a Buddha? In Tibetan tradition, we say that when we write "Om Ah Hum," behind a Thangka, it is a blessing and we imagine that it is a real Buddha.

Firstly, for statues, it cannot be left empty – they have (to be consecrated) with head, neck, heart, hand, and tummy and lotus mantras in the statues. After blessings, even if it is a picture, we see it as a real Buddha. Then once we see the statue as a real Buddha we can receive the merits automatically.

Secondly, if we can visualize that is a real Buddha with respect and faith, we can receive full merits. Third, even if we don't know anything about the Buddhism, we still receive merits. Next, if we happen to be angry and came

across a Buddha statue, the Buddha still gives us blessings and we receive merits. These are the benefits of statues.

Next, we cannot say, "this quality is no good, this quality is good or I don't like this," there is no need to mention. Some statues are not so nice maybe but you cannot mention that the statues are not nice however ugly it is. But you can say that the person who made the statue or thangka was not skillful.

Once you step inside the temple, you will need to do prostrations. Our hands must close (facing each other) the thumbs must bend inwards, this hand (gesture) represents Buddha's head (ushnisha) and inside the hand is empty and this represents precious wealth. Once you put your hands on your head (crown), represents in the future we will also become a Buddha. There are so many kinds of wealth: Dharma wealth, auspicious wealth, harmony wealth, luck wealth. We prostrate putting our hands on the crown, followed by the body, speech and mind. These three are always together. So Buddha is on the head, body, speech is dharma and mind – compassion for all mother sentient beings.



see so many stars in the sky. So you prostrate thinking there are so many Buddhas like stars and I prostrate to all of them.

Why do we do prostration? It is an offering of our form or body. Our body is very precious. You can ask anybody, "Is your body is very precious?" Of course my body is very precious. That is why I am offering my prostrations to the Buddha. I am giving my life as an offering to the Buddha and it is up to you to decide whatever you want to do. Of course, if you bring me to Buddhahood I am happy and if you bring me to hell I will be very sad but it depends on you. But I am offering you my whole body to you.

Why do I want to offer my body to the Buddha? I want all my mother sentient beings who are suffering in the world for the suffering to be removed. That is why on behalf of all mother sentient beings I prostrate. So once you think like this how much merit do you get? We don't know because we cannot see. But we definitely receive the merits.

Besides reciting mantras, reading dharma books, we should just think a little bit, there is no need to think so much. This is how we offer to all the Buddhas, "On behalf of all mother sentient beings, I do prostrations to all Buddhas to bring them to Buddhahood." One person can help but if everybody do it together this way, it will be stronger and very powerful.

If we want to sweep the floor and we use one broomstick it takes a very long time but if we have many broomsticks then together we can sweep very fast. Who is the one broomstick? Me, only one. And the joined broomsticks are all mother sentient beings therefore whatever prayers joined with mother sentient beings becomes very powerful.

Therefore, whatever prayers we make, we must include all mother sentient beings. There is no need to mention my parents etc. because your mother, father, wife, husband, children and you are also there, your guru and everybody including your country. Some people say, "I want to pray for my country," but it not necessary to mention like this. But you can make offerings on behalf of your country, children, or parents and in your mind just offer for all mother sentient beings. This 100 per cent a more powerful way to accumulate merits.

There two kinds of Buddhahood. One is Rang Sange. Rang means I am Buddha - only me. I want Buddhahood and I don't need mother sentient beings. In this way also people become a Buddha, - only one, they don't think of other beings. This way to become a Buddha is very slow and takes a long time to reach Buddhahood. If on behalf of all mother sentient beings then is very fast – something like a rocket like that. Many in the Buddha-lands are Rang Sange.



Picture 1: Short Prostration

You may think: where do I prostrate? Which direction should I prostrate? Who do I prostrate to? We should prostrate thinking all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are in front of me – hundreds, thousands and millions of Buddhas are around. There is no need to think that I only want to pray to Guanyin Pusa. I want to pray to Lama Tsongkhapa. Or I want to pray to Buddha or Tara. Do every prostration thinking that you are surrounded by many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, like stars – big or small up to you to imagine. Singapore you cannot see so many stars right? But in the Himalayans, you can

So thinking is very important. Sometimes, we did wrong – never mind. We just apologize, say sorry, say forgive me – in your mind. In this way our sins can be removed. If we do good things then our life gets better and better, if we do bad things then our lives will get worse.

Beginning of our lives we are very happy because parents are good and very kind and we enjoy. But after parents passed away then we cannot do anything because we never did good things and we were always with bad company. Then our lives will get worse and worse and at the end of the lives there will be so much sufferings.

It is not necessary to become so rich, just enough for us to live is good. Too much money will cause our mind to change, create greediness for power and more craving. If I am too rich then I have no time to practice Dharma and I have no time to accumulate merit.

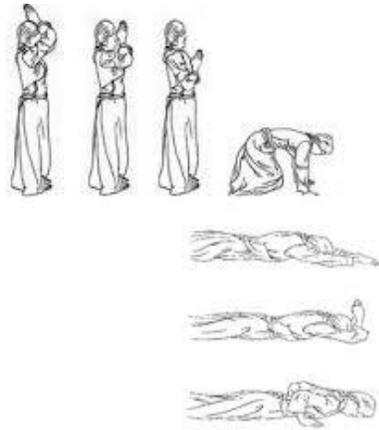
So, prostrations we do on behalf of all mother sentient beings. Then we have the body, speech and mind. Body is from your head (crown) - in the future we become Buddhas, speech is Buddha's speech or Dharma which shows us the way and mind is compassion for all mother sentient beings. There are three or four kinds of prostrations. First is the full version of prostration.

Here we are going all the way on the floor. Our hands (fingers) cannot open (keep them close to each other). Our foreheads must touch the floor. And we think that our bodies are flowing like water flowing into all areas. (Refer to Picture 2)

Then the second one is a short prostration. We just kneel down, hands together, bow down and our foreheads must touch the ground. (Picture 1).

The shortest one is done when some people who cannot get up easily so they can kneel and /or just do the hand actions. If you are not healthy is ok to do like this. Then, there is the mind prostration where your hands are not even moving. These are the four kinds of

prostrations. When we do body offerings, we don't have to spend any money.



Picture 2: Full Prostration

Then about offering items, today I want to offer 1000 biscuits, if there was a little bit of stinginess in our mind – it is not a right way to offer. We still can come up with money but don't think that it is expensive – simply rejoice at your own spending.

Sometimes, when many people are around, I give \$100 but when there is nobody watching, I give less. This is a wrong action. There is no need to compare with others. Think, they are offering so much, I rejoice. I am offering only this biscuits, my biscuits is not small, and it is as huge as Mount Meru. Mount Meru is the king of mountain that is the kind of offering I offer to the Buddha.

There is no need to spend a lot of money but if you have extra money then you can offer if you don't have then just think – hold it in your mind. This biscuits I offer on behalf of all mother sentient beings. I want them to have enough food throughout their lives and not have sufferings. This is the offering in mind – it is a very huge offering as big as the Himalayan Mountains and I offer to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas surrounding. Such an offering will definitely gain merits.

Now why must we do three prostrations? Three times are for body, speech and mind. Three is also for auspiciousness referring to taking refuge

in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. For the Tibetans the refuge say – Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Normally we do three only, less than three we cannot do but more than three prostrations is ok. The Chinese like the number 8 right? So you can do eight prostrations, 100 also can. So you can do more prostrations but you cannot less than three prostrations. Tibetans like 7 or 21 times as they are auspicious.

Why do we need auspicious(actions)?

We need peace, happiness, we need auspicious actions to receive merits automatically. This is how we offer items auspiciously.

Offering of lamps in the 21st century.



Lamps come in the form of electricity and candles – it is an easy way to offer lights but actually we get less merits. Because you just buy the candles and light only. If we can do, normally the proper way is to offer a butter lamp, this way, we can get more merits because we put in more effort and work into the preparations of a butter lamp.

As we offer the butter lamp, we think it is as huge as the world, the oil is as wide as the sea, the wick as huge as Mount Meru and the light represents the 8 auspicious signs and seven kinds of treasures. (Refer to picture 3)

Actually the wick that we use to make the butter lamp is quite thick at the bottom and gets smaller as it goes to the top and is very sharp and the sharpness represents wisdom.

What kind of wisdom do we need? We need Dharma wisdom, study wisdom etc. We visualize that our butter lamp offering is so big that it reaches Mount Meru and in this way, we get merits.



Picture 3: Seven kinds of treasures (*The Precious Wheel, Precious Jewel, Precious Queen, Precious Minister, Precious Elephant, Precious Horse, Precious General, and the great Treasure Vase.*)

Why do I offer lamps? We offer the butter lamps on behalf of all the mother sentient beings for their benefit to accumulate merits for food, drinks, clothes etc. In this way, we receive full merits. If we do three or four times like this we get so much merit in our merit account.

Even if one or two weeks we think like this, we will definitely feel better- you try. At the beginning it may be hard for us to think like this but slowly we will be able to do it easily.

The light of the lamp benefits us when we pass away, that merit or wisdom we can use it. When we die we can be in brightness or darkness. In the lower realms, it is darker than here ten times so the benefit of light offering can give us brightness (light).

The oil represents wealth, the fire (light) represents the wisdom. The 8 auspicious signs gives us harmony, peace, happiness and wealth. This is the benefit from offering a butter lamp.

We must always offer on the behalf of all mother sentient beings wishing to bring all of them to Buddhahood, this is my offering to all the beings. Then you can say, "Oh! I rejoice, I got a chance to offer light for other beings - this is my

karma and my benefit so I am very happy." These are benefits of light offerings.

Why do we offer lights in this way? Because all mother sentient beings are suffering so much and I want to remove their suffering from my side by helping them. My light offering will make it easy for them to get the benefit and reach Buddhahood.

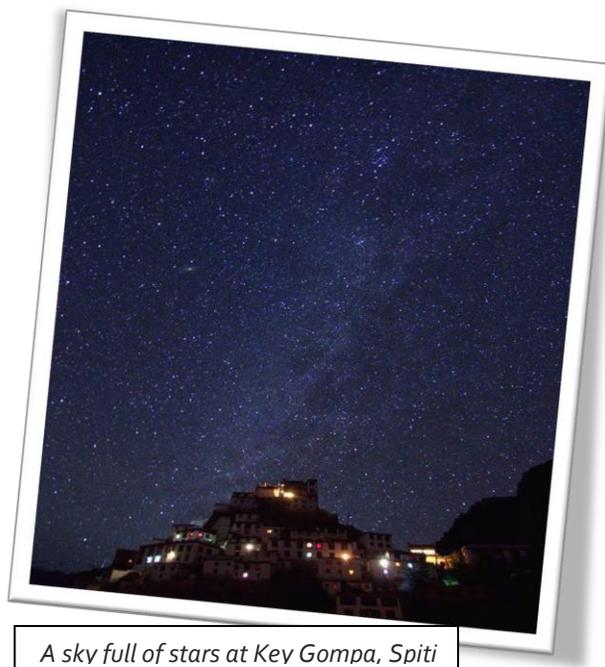
We make very strong motivation, fully respecting Buddha and with pure thoughts for other beings in our mind. Then you can say until Buddhahood all mother sentient beings will get benefit from this butter lamp. Our offering can be a small item but when we think, we think as big as we can. We get much merit and also help other beings.

Next is water offerings. Other Buddhist traditions also offer water but in Tibetan Buddhism we practice more water offering. Why do we do water offering? Water looks nothing special, after offering we pour it back, we never use the water and it looks wasted...

Firstly, when we offer we mustn't be stingy, in Himalayan and Tibet water is totally free, we just go and collect. There is no need to pay. In Singapore, you still have to pay.

When we do water offering, we can offer without feeling stingy. During the Buddha time, he went on alms asking for food. One of the family was very poor. The family members did not have even one grain of rice to eat but they had only one bowl of water. So when Buddha came, the lady invited the Buddha and offered the bowl of water. Then the Buddha told the lady, you gave me this water I have received so much benefit from this water and so did you. Why did I receive so much of benefit from this water? Asked the lady.

Because you were not stingy and you offered whatever you had. Buddha said, "This is the best offering for me. This water is enough for me." This



A sky full of stars at Key Gompa, Spiti

lady received so much benefit from offering this one bowl of water.

In Tibetan tradition, normally we offer 7. It is auspicious like 7 treasures. We can offer more than 7 like 8, 9 etc.

When we are offering, we start from Buddha's right hand which is our left side. Whatever we offer, first go from Buddha's right then we keep from Buddha's left side.

There are seven bowls, and in each bowl there must be a little bit of water (it should not be left empty). You should think that water represents holy water blessing from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and that this water is really precious water.

Once we pour the water inside, we think all the Buddha's blessings giving into the water, the water can benefit those who have nothing to eat or drink. Think that just one drop of water is enough for so many people throughout their lives. Pour one by one until the seventh.

You need to leave a gap of the size of a rice. Why? Because without rice we cannot survive, in order to have rice for our whole life we are creating auspiciousness in this way. In Tibet and Himalayan, they have barley which is slightly bigger than rice. They say leave a gap of the size of a barley.

As you pour the water, you start pouring thinly first then getting bigger, then



slowly pour thinly again. At the end, each bowl of water offering is full leaving a size of rice gap. Why do we pour the water in this way? This is for long life until we reach Buddhahood we can continue to offer like this and get merits.

And at each dripping water you have to recite mantra, Om Ah Hum, which is very special. This purifies the offering items. Even though water filters clean the water still we cannot see beings in the water that needs help. Om Ah Hum helps to purify.

At the end of the seventh bowl or when we are holding flowers, we can say OM AH Hum three times and that makes the offering extra pure.

Why do we do offerings such as food (fruits), flowers or water? Do the Buddhas need fruits, flowers or water? The Buddhas do not need but we need because when we offer we get merit so that is why we offer. What do we need to think during our offering time? We have to always think of sentient beings. Then definitely we will receive merits. "So, today I offer and tomorrow I'll get?" It does not work like that. It takes time and slowly we accumulate our merits.

According to Tibetan tradition we offer 7 or more water bowls. Other traditions can be different. But we cannot say Tibetans must have 7. Lama Tsongkhapa was very poor and had only one wooden bowl. He ate using that bowl, cooked also he using that bowl. He

washed that same bowl and offered water to the Buddha. Therefore, it depends on the person (individual). If you have enough money then you should buy 7 bowls for water offering.

Our lamas normally wear yellow robe called Gelong.

The lamas have to buy this robe because during grand prayer we have to wear. Buddha said if we have money to buy goats then we have to spend money to buy the robe. Therefore, in the same way, if you have enough then you buy to make offerings.

The seven offerings are: water, water, flowers, incense, candles, water and fruits. This is called the seven treasures offerings of auspiciousness. You can simply use 7 bowls of water to represent these 7 treasure offerings. Music is not necessary because you are doing prayers.

Why is there an offering of one water bowl and another water bowl? During the time of Buddha Shakyamuni, according to the culture of India before a king enters an invited place, he washes his legs. Therefore, this represents the first bowl of water. The second bowl of water is for drinking.

There is also the offering of flowers as a welcome. Followed by incense offering during the king's arrival into the place. Fifth, is candle offering and the sixth, is another bowl of water that represents perfume for all the surrounding area. Seventh, is the offering food such as biscuits, cakes and so on.

Many people like durians, but it has a very strong smell so some other people might not like it. So, it is better not to offer.

It is best is to change the water offerings every day.

Flowers offerings are for decorations so when people see the flowers they say, "Wow, the flowers are so nice," it makes people happy and the Buddhas also accept that happiness.

Whatever offering we make, it must be very clean. We must wash our hands and during offering time, we should not talk so much because our saliva cannot touch the offering items. Saying, *Om Ah Hum* makes it extra clean (pure).

There are many kinds of nice smelling incense that makes surrounding Nagas, lower realms beings, beings without forms, happy. They need only the incense smell.

We can visualize our offerings decorating the golden palace of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, making the area very nice with flowers, nice smell and once people see them, it makes them feel very good. Therefore, it makes people rejoice. This is good. Perfume also has the same benefit as incense.

The mantra to increase the prostrations is *Namo Manjushriye, Namu Sushriye, Namu Uttamashriye Soha*.

You can also say *namo gurubhya, namo buddhaya, namo dharmaya, namo sanghaya*. One more thing is that during prostrations time, get up quickly. Some people like to stay 10 or 15 minutes this is not good. If you stand up fast, we won't become animals in the future. However, when people are doing prostrations, we cannot cross their path.

We will stop here for now. Thank you!

Refuge prayer

*Sang-gye cho-dang tsog-kyi chog-nam-la
Jang-chup ber-du dag-ni kyab-su-chi
Da-gi jin-sok gyi-pay tsog-nam-kyi
Dro-la phen-chir sang-gye drub-per-shog.*

Short prayer of Migtsema

*Mig- may tse -way ter- chen Chen- Re- Zig
Dri-may khyen-pay wong-po Jam-Pel-Yang
Do-ping ma-lu jon-zay Sang-Way-Dag
Gang-chen khay-pay tsug-gyenTsong-kha-pa
Lo-sang drag-pay shab-la sol-wa-deb.*